THE HIGH SCHOOL FOR RECORDING ARTS

FOUR FINGERS
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ISSUE #1

NOTICE

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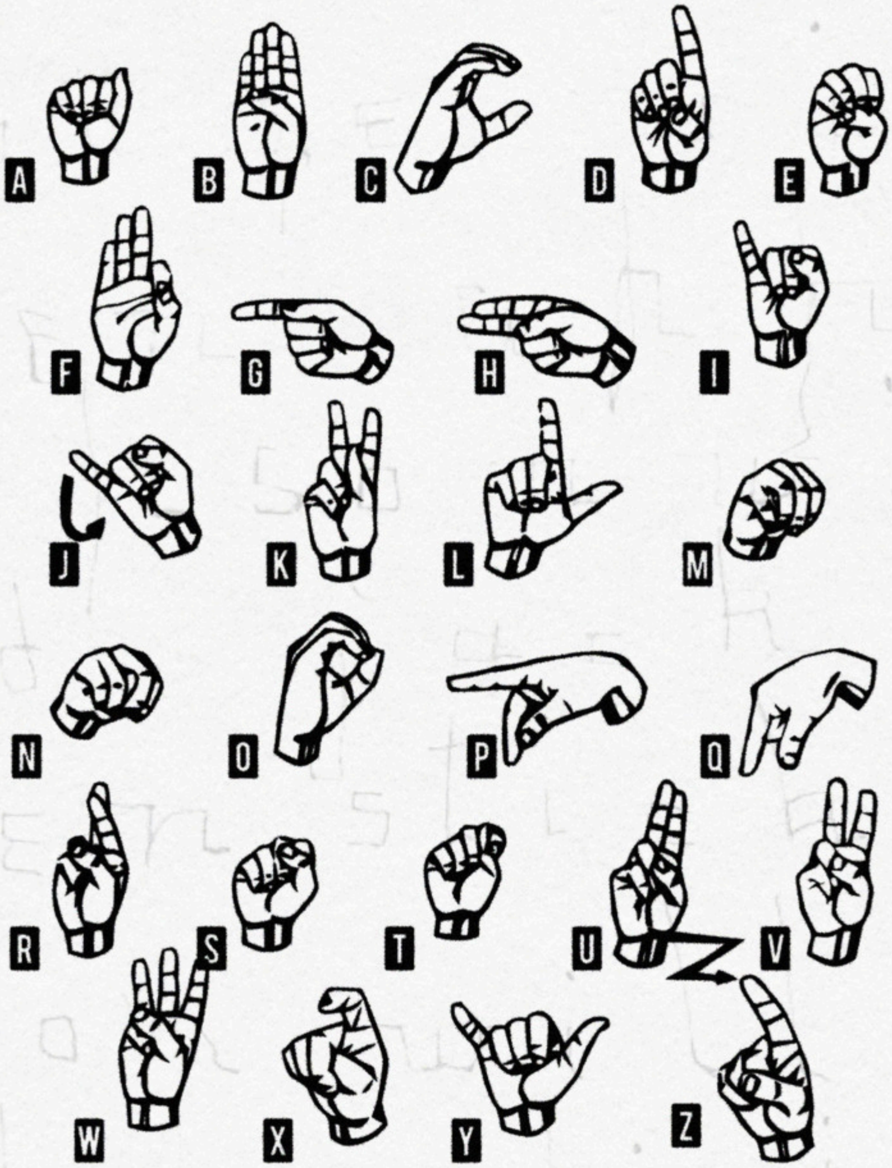
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Helen Keller noted, "Hands were more honest than faces: We may compose our faces, but our hands speak open and unconscious truths"

—— ***Four Fingers Magazine***, Issue #1

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The High School for Recording Arts began in the mid-1990s when David "TC" Ellis opened a music studio in St. Paul and noticed that young people who had dropped out or felt disconnected from school were consistently showing up, drawn to the creative space. Instead of turning them away, he started a small pilot program in 1996 that blended education with hands-on music training. The idea took off, and by 1998 the state approved it as an official [illegible] From the start, [illegible] giving [illegible] earn their diploma [illegible] learning through recording.

producing, writing, and real-world creative projects. As the years went on, the school expanded with professional studios, media labs, and a project-based approach that helped re-engage students who didn't thrive in traditional settings. Many came from challenging situations, an HSRA became a place that respecte their voice and gave them structu support, and real indus experience. Its impact grew, gain national attention for its un combination of academ s, mentorship, and music industry training. [illegible] creativity, opportunity, and [illegible] learning environment built around their gifts.

OPEN THE CASH

REGISTER ONLINE.

Scan this code to start you online registration for the Hig School for Recording Arts. Once you scan it with your phone's camera, you'll be taken directly to our digital enrollment form, where you can enter your information, choose your areas of interest, and complete the first steps toward joining our community.

Writer, Journalist, Illustrator, Photographer,
Graphic & Interior Designer, Editor, Publisher *Jordan Lyles*

Assistant Photographer *Khloe Kruchowski*

FOUR FINGERS
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR........ 8
FOX NEWS........ 16
HSRA BACKSTORY........ 20
FLIP IT LIKE A JAMES BROWN SAMPLE........ 26
CHECK YO SELF... OR SAVE YO SELF........ 32
THROW YOUR CAPS IN THA AIR........ 36
LETS NOT GET BIG HEADED........ 40
CHROMEDOME........ 42
EVERYBODY LOVES SCHOOL LUNCH........ 48
STAFF OF HSRA........ 54
WOMEN EARS........ 70
ARTIST FEATURE........ 80
KICK BUTTOWSKI........ 84
PHOTOGRAPHY........ 86
FOUR FINGERS SESSIONS........ 94
PHOTOGRAPHY CONTINUED........ 96
ART SECTION........ 100
SPORTS SECTION........ 116
A LOVE FOR COMICS........ 130
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR II........ 134
COMIC SECTION........ 136
FOR THE LAUGHS........ 152
MARCH TOGETHER........ 160
JELLYBEAN JOHNSON........ 168
THE PURPLE PAGES........ 170
REMIX ED........ 186
CALI4NIA........ 204
BUSINESS HIGHLIGHT........ 206
ANGER TRANSLATOR........ 208
PERFORMANCES........ 210
HOMELESS RESOURCES........ 220
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT........ 224
STAFF UNPLUGGED........ 242
MIKING DRUMS........ 244
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT........ 248
MUSIC SECTION........ 258
QRS4U........ 278

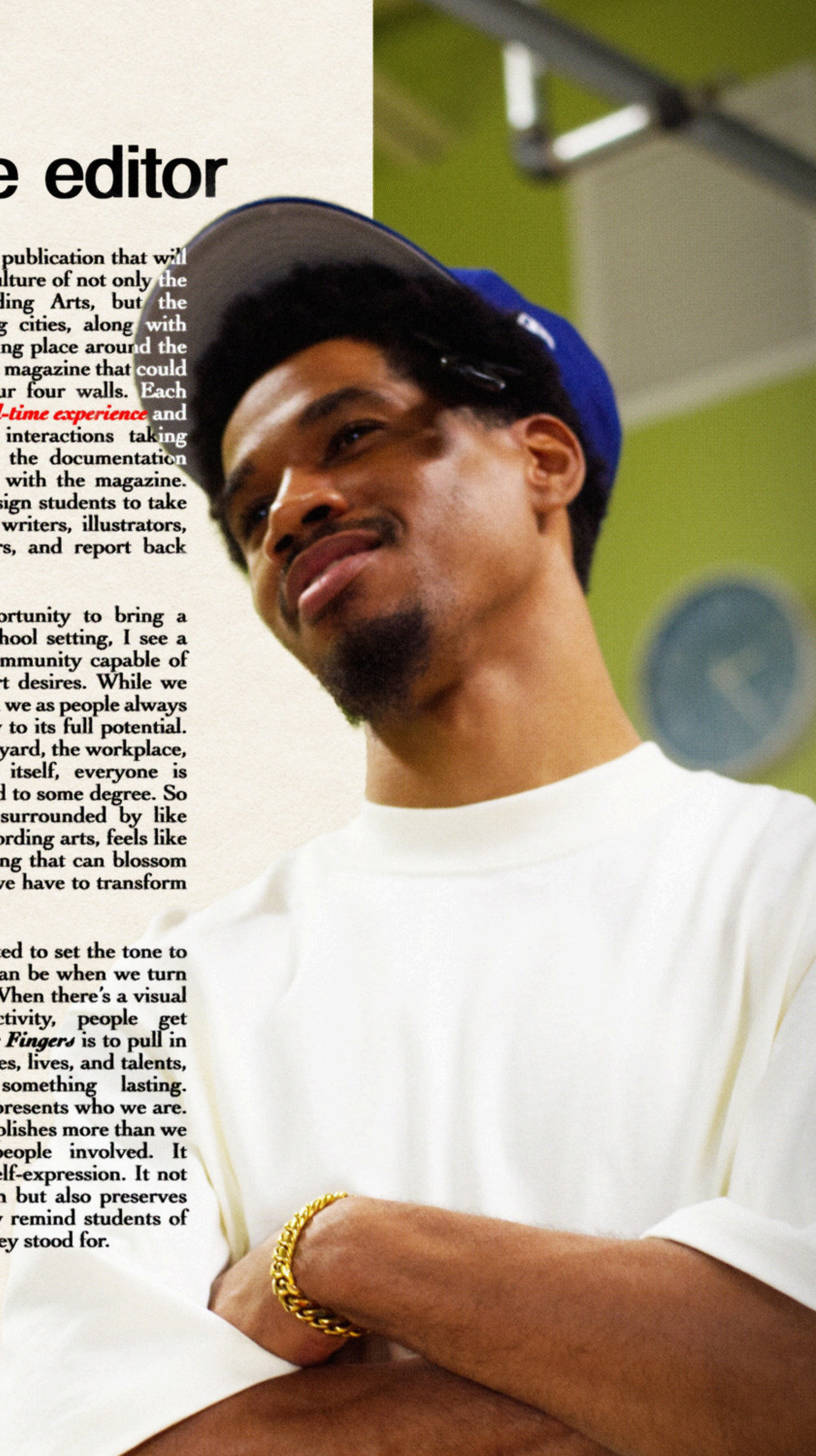
WELCOME TO THE FIRST ISSUE

Letter from the editor

Four Fingers Magazine is a publication that will blend music, art, and the culture of not only the High School For Recording Arts, but the culture of the surrounding cities, along with current events that are taking place around the world. It will be treated as a magazine that could possibly extend beyond our four walls. Each issue will be based on a ***real-time experience*** and day-to-day activities and interactions taking place, often supported by the documentation that will go hand in hand with the magazine. Overtime, the plan is to assign students to take on different roles such as writers, illustrators, photographers, interviewers, and report back with their contributions.

When I look at the opportunity to bring a magazine catalog into a school setting, I see a body of potential and a community capable of creating whatever the heart desires. While we can have unity, I don't think we as people always exercise the power of unity to its full potential. Whether it be in the school yard, the workplace, or throughout the world itself, everyone is moving on their own accord to some degree. So being in an environment surrounded by like minds, all rooted in the recording arts, feels like the perfect soil for something that can blossom beyond the pages, even if we have to transform a few perspectives.

With this first issue, I wanted to set the tone to show how productive we can be when we turn every interaction into art. When there's a visual representation of productivity, people get excited. My goal with ***Four Fingers*** is to pull in many voices, different stories, lives, and talents, and pour them into something lasting. Something tangible that represents who we are. A magazine like this accomplishes more than we realize. It gets young people involved. It encourages a plethora of self-expression. It not only exercises collaboration but also preserves memories that will one day remind students of who they were and what they stood for.



photographed by ***Khloe Kruchowski***

In a world where everything is fleeting and digital, I want this to bring us back to stillness, to something you can hold, something that will matter to the young people. You can delete a post, but you can't delete a magazine. When someone gets a hold of one, they have a piece of you. It's almost like a song; but you can only hear a song. With this, you can see it and hold it. Some may appreciate it more than the next, but I'm always thinking long term.

Within the magazine, readers will find insight, learning moments, laughs, art, sports, comics, and more. The idea of including comics goes back to childhood and is what originally sparked the concept for this publication. The first thing I ever wanted to do was draw comics. I was always sketching people, moments, ideas. Teachers thought I wasn't paying attention, but drawing helped me focus. Looking back, I see how even that small habit was preparation for what I'm doing now. Drawing people has always been an honor to me, and pairing art with real perspectives feels like a full circle gift. That being said, this issue also ties to purpose. As of now, I'll be visiting Minnesota once a month, not just to build relationships but to build relationships productively.

Why Minnesota? In 2021, I had a series of dreams about Prince that I didn't quite understand at the time, wondering why he was popping up in my dreams. I never really listened to Prince; he wasn't even on my radar of music. Growing up, I didn't listen to much music outside of songs from movies or what I heard playing around the neighborhood, so a lot of artists I never even got into.

Not long after these dreams, I met TC, Tony, Mike, and Scott. After sitting in an interview with them, they brought me on board to facilitate the music program for 4 Learning at a site in Moreno Valley, California. 4 Learning is the sister organization to the High School for Recording Arts. They mentioned the initial candidate was too busy and he ended up referring me instead. I got the call one day after I was praying about purpose, and purpose literally knocked on my front door; the site was right down the street from where I lived.

Letter from the editor

continued...

At the time I was chasing my idea of a music career, and at times that can feel self-centered. Those days where it gets quiet make you crave purpose. After getting well acclimated with TC, I realized those Prince dreams were connected, especially after learning about his history and work with Prince. It was one of those moments where God lines everything up in ways you can't make up. I had no teaching background, but I ended up facilitating this program, and it came naturally. At first, I thought it was temporary, like I'd go somewhere else, and the young people would look back and say, "He used to be my teacher!." But then I realized… this was life work.

I watched a lot of cartoons growing up, whatever my brother and I could agree on while sharing a room. But every Friday at 8 PM, that was my time. It was serious business. If I was playing outside, I'd drop whatever I was doing and sprint inside to catch my favorite show. It didn't matter what was happening, I wasn't missing that 30-minute time slot for anything. The show was called Class of 3000, and it captivated me in a way no other cartoon ever had.

Class of 3000 is an animated series created by André 3000 of OutKast that aired on Cartoon Network from 2006 to 2008. A famous musician who returned to his hometown in Atlanta to teach music at a local school. He formed a class of talented and diverse students, helping them discover their abilities through music, creativity, and life lessons. When I first started working in this field, I couldn't help but laugh to myself; or actually, laugh with God because I realized I was living out my favorite cartoon in real time.

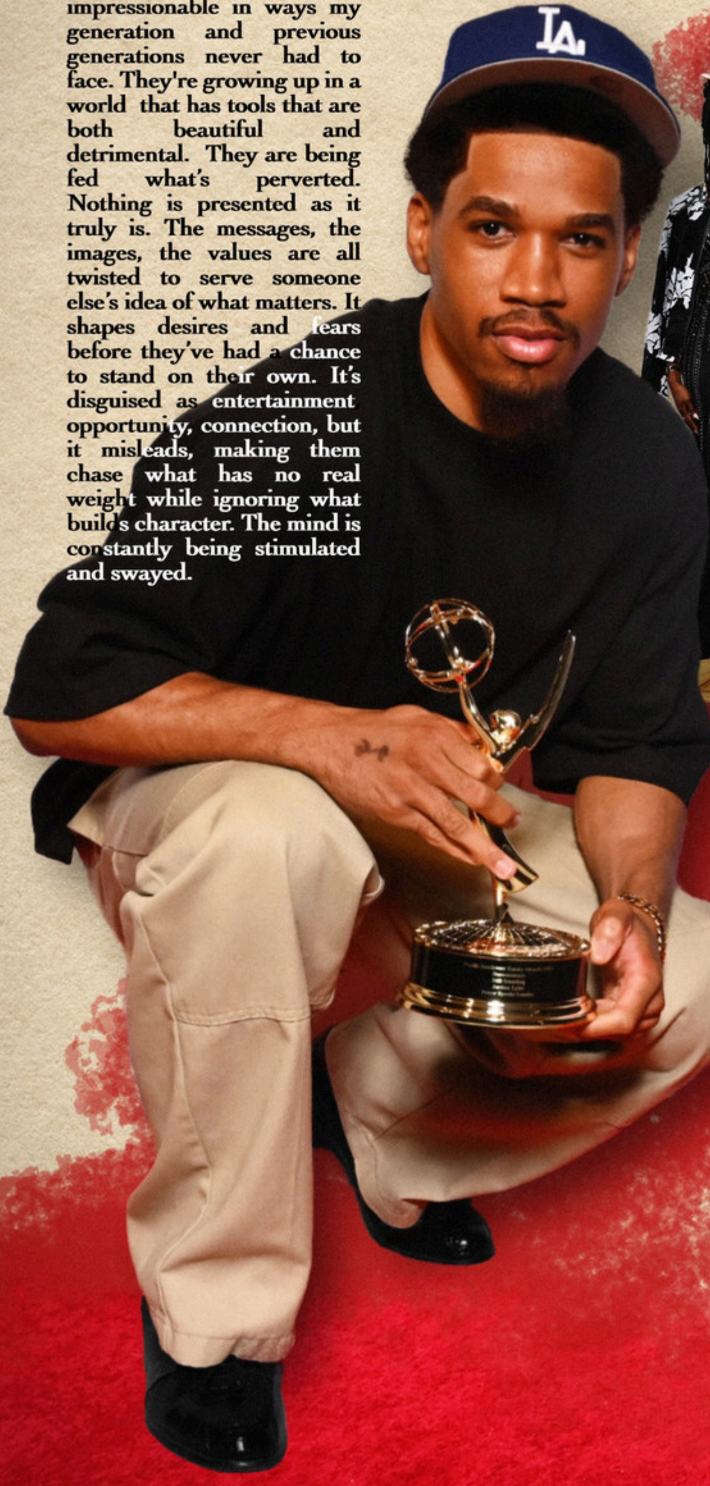
Years later, I find myself in Minnesota at The High School for Recording Arts, a place that was never part of my plan, but looking back, I can see every step was guided. God had already written it in. I'd just been catching up to the script.

ELECTRICAL ROOM

Letter from the editor

continued...

Young people today are impressionable in ways my generation and previous generations never had to face. They're growing up in a world that has tools that are both beautiful and detrimental. They are being fed what's perverted. Nothing is presented as it truly is. The messages, the images, the values are all twisted to serve someone else's idea of what matters. It shapes desires and fears before they've had a chance to stand on their own. It's disguised as entertainment, opportunity, connection, but it misleads, making them chase what has no real weight while ignoring what builds character. The mind is constantly being stimulated and swayed.



If there's one message to give a young person before they spend years learning a lesson the hard way, it's this: stop chasing vanity. So much early life is spent running after things thought to validate us; achievements, recognition, the idea of being "somebody."

From experience of being in the rat race, I can say life has matured into a place of real contentment, the kind that isn't shaken by applause or accomplishment. Upon receiving what most consider a "prestigious" award, I felt nothing. But a *good* nothing.

I watched everyone bow their heads before the results, tense with desire. And there's nothing wrong with wanting to win. But my spirit felt still. I had no nerves, nor detachment. It was peace. Then I thought about social media and realized I wasn't tied to the outcome or worried about sharing it online, since I don't use it. As an observer, I can tell the tension in the building was rooted in the fact that half these people just wanted to make a big announcement. It made me wonder; without a way to show highlights, would any of this really matter to these people?

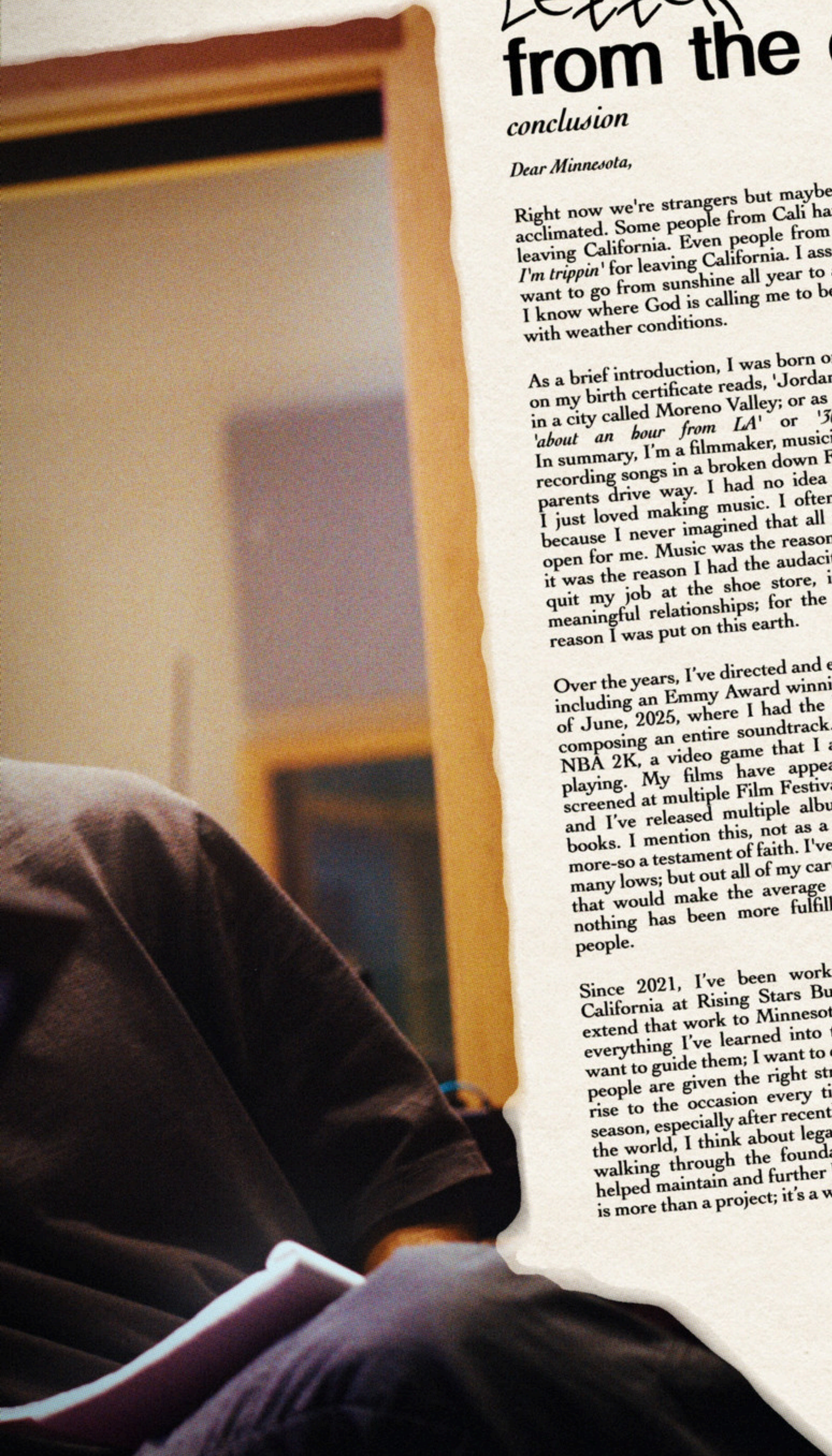
Earlier that night, a Black man with his son stopped me and said, "I was just telling my son, 'You see that man in the Dickies? I guarantee you he's somebody.'" With this being a dress-to-impress occasion and me wearing a black tee, Dickies, and a hat, you can imagine that translates to, "You see that guy who didn't get the memo? I guarantee he *knows* somebody." And that's not a negative observation, but it's not the case. I just like Dickies, tee shirts, and hats. Furthermore, it felt like foresight.

Later that night, as I'm leaving the event, a white man said to me as I walked down the stairs, "You wore that hat, huh?" referring to my blue LA hat. "I guess we'll let you slide… because you won." I'll let you translate what "we'll let you slide" means coming from a white man in a predominantly white atmosphere. I just kept walking. No anger. No bitterness. Just walked to the parking garage, put the trophy in the trunk and drove home.

Earlier that year, I wrote a song that asked, "How do you treat a man or woman before you know a name and what they do for a career?" Those moments reinforced that lesson. Recognition, applause, and the aura of being "somebody" are fleeting. What truly matters is how a person treats others when no one is watching. If you are young, do not be moved by someone's presence because of what they have accomplished. Be moved by how they treat others. The world worships trophies, God measures character. That is the only award worth chasing.

If you join the choir, don't perform for the audience; perform for the song.

— photographed by Charles Jorden,
for the album *Choir*.



Letter from the editor

conclusion

Dear Minnesota,

Right now we're strangers but maybe overtime we'll get more acclimated. Some people from Cali have told me *I'm trippin'* for leaving California. Even people from Minnesota have told me *I'm trippin'* for leaving California. I assume they wonder why I'd want to go from sunshine all year to a place so cold. However, I know where God is calling me to be, and it has nothing to do with weather conditions.

As a brief introduction, I was born on July 28, 1999. The name on my birth certificate reads, 'Jordan Michael Lyles'. I grew up in a city called Moreno Valley; or as I have to explain to people, '*about an hour from LA*' or '*30 minutes from Riverside*'. In summary, I'm a filmmaker, musician, and author. I started off recording songs in a broken down Ford Explorer that sat in my parents drive way. I had no idea of a career or a direction. I just loved making music. I often think back to those times because I never imagined that all the doors that music would open for me. Music was the reason I first ever flew on a plane, it was the reason I had the audacity to take a leap of faith and quit my job at the shoe store, it was the reason for many meaningful relationships; for the longest time, it felt like the reason I was put on this earth.

Over the years, I've directed and edited multiple documentaries, including an Emmy Award winning documentary in the month of June, 2025, where I had the honor of filming, editing, and composing an entire soundtrack. I've had my music placed in NBA 2K, a video game that I and many other kids grew up playing. My films have appeared on Amazon Prime and screened at multiple Film Festivals in Los Angeles and Virginia and I've released multiple albums and written a plethora of books. I mention this, not as a display of what I've done, but more-so a testament of faith. I've seen highs, and I've seen many-many lows; but out all of my career endeavors and achievements that would make the average eye assume a level of success, nothing has been more fulfilling than working with young people.

Since 2021, I've been working with the young people in California at Rising Stars Business Academy. And now, as I extend that work to Minnesota and HSRA, my goal is to pour everything I've learned into this next generation. I don't just want to guide them; I want to create *with* them. Whenever young people are given the right structure, freedom, and belief, they rise to the occasion every time. And as I step into this new season, especially after recently welcoming my newborn son into the world, I think about legacy. I imagine him growing up and walking through the foundation of a school culture that we helped maintain and further build upon. ***Four Fingers Magazine*** is more than a project; it's a way to create something long lasting.

Sincerely,

Jordan Lyles

1998

FOX 9
NEWS

ROBYNE ROBINSON (NEWS ANCHOR):
You know the saying, "Be cool, stay in school." Well, there's a high school in St. Paul that's so cool, it's actually attracting students who had previously dropped out. Stefan Reynolds has today's lesson in learning that should be music to parents' ears.

STEFAN REYNOLDS (REPORTER):
I'm Stefan Reynolds, and today's lesson in learning should be music to parents' ears.

DAVELL MONTGOMERY (STUDENT):
If I wasn't here, I'd probably be in the streets or getting kicked out of a regular school right now.

REYNOLDS:
And this is no regular school—despite appearances. So, which one of these things is not like the others? Is it the teachers? The computer lab? Maybe the recording studio? If you guessed the studio, give yourself an A. The idea for this "Hip-Hop High" came from this man: David Ellis. Ellis has worked at Paisley Park, performed in a Prince movie, and even started his own recording studio called Studio 4. But he says the highlight of his career has been helping kids.

DAVID ELLIS:
A lot of my customers were young people who wanted to do hip-hop music. I realized that many of them hadn't graduated from high school—but they were really motivated to learn when education was connected to something that interested them.

ELLIS:
And it works. That's what's so exciting about the program. The results are visible every day.
Kids who wouldn't normally be in school—or motivated to do academics—are now driven by the opportunity to work in the recording studio.

REYNOLDS:
And it's not all theoretical.
At the High School for Recording Arts, students are producing their own CD—written, mixed, and performed entirely by them. It even carries a message: *"HIV Ain't No Joke."*

TEACHER (IN STUDIO):
Okay guys, we're coming in on the chorus—ready?

STUDENTS (SINGING):
"Ain't no joke, keep it real, protect yourself…"

ELLIS:
What's coming out of here is phenomenal—it surpasses anything I've ever done.
Seeing these young people do what they love—and knowing they're on track in life—is incredible.
To point them in the right direction and help change their lives forever… that's something I just can't pass up.

STUDENT:
We're learning about personal health now—about STDs, sexually transmitted diseases.

REYNOLDS:
That "something" was music. And so, last December, David had an idea: **Studio 4 High School for Recording Arts.** But there's much more to it than recording arts—and you don't get into the studio until you get your classwork done.

It's a conventional curriculum designed for unconventional students

REYNOLDS:
At the High School for Recording Arts, the lessons go far beyond the classroom.
And for these students, that's music to everyone's ears.

— High School for Recording Arts,
Fox 9 News, 1998

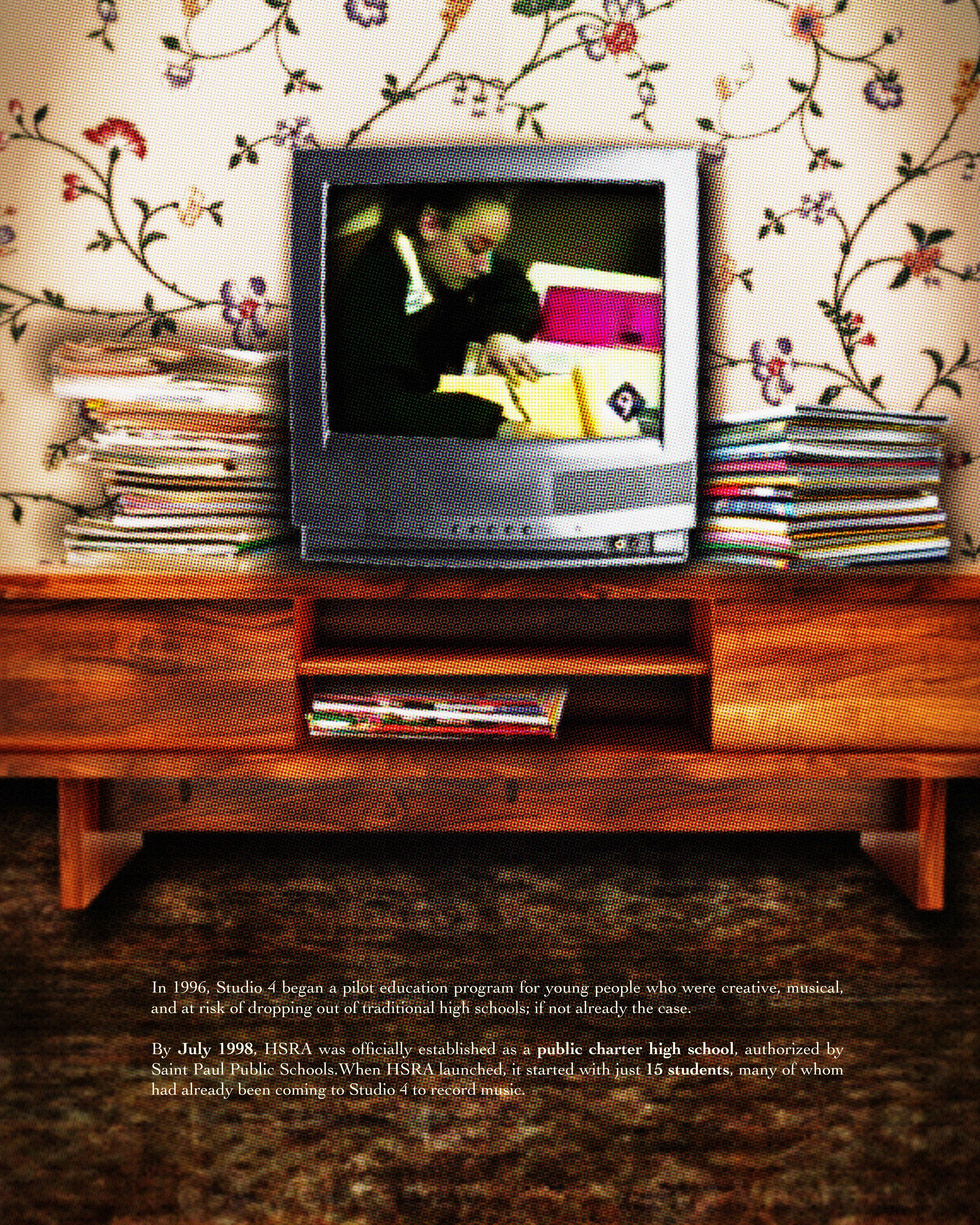
— Scan the QR code to view the news archive.

Sometimes life feels like a cycle, one that makes you ask, *what's the point of any of this?* We are born into families and circumstances over which we have no control. Some are born rich, others into poverty. Some are handed opportunities, while others hope someone will hand them one. Regardless of the circumstances, we all go to school in one form or another — traditional classrooms, private institutions, or the hard knocks of life itself.

Through it all, we learn. Sometimes it's trigonometry, sometimes it's the simple truth that fire will burn you if you touch it. We take that knowledge and shape our lives around it, learning through experience, success, and failure. But one constant remains: no matter what we know or how deeply we've experienced life, we all eventually expire. So, what is the point of it all?

It's easy to imagine that this humdrum outlook might keep someone from trying to make a difference. But in all my reflection, I believe the greatest knowledge anyone can gain comes through the act of service for others. That is where life gains meaning. It's in opening a door when it's freezing outside. It's in offering a small act of kindness without expecting anything in return. These acts of love create a domino effect, spreading further than we can ever measure. You may not even realize the ripple you've started, but the love you give has the power to touch people for years to come, simply by the choices they make because of it.

Life may feel like a cycle, but service transforms it from repetition into purpose.



In 1996, Studio 4 began a pilot education program for young people who were creative, musical, and at risk of dropping out of traditional high schools; if not already the case.

By **July 1998**, HSRA was officially established as a **public charter high school**, authorized by Saint Paul Public Schools. When HSRA launched, it started with just **15 students**, many of whom had already been coming to Studio 4 to record music.

HIGH SCHOOL 4 RECORDING ARTS

the back story.

As told to Jordan Lyles, excerpted from a conversation with David 'TC' Ellis—

1996 "…I opened up my recording studio because I wanted to make money and I wanted to still be in the music business. I didn't have the record deal anymore. That went away, so I opened this studio on the Skyway level downtown in St. Paul.

The Skyway is where all the kids would hang out. It's this system of glass bridges that connects the buildings downtown because it gets so cold. So all the kids that ditched school were roaming around up there, and my studio was right in the mix of it. They'd always stop by wanting to get in, asking me, "Let us record something. Let us do this."

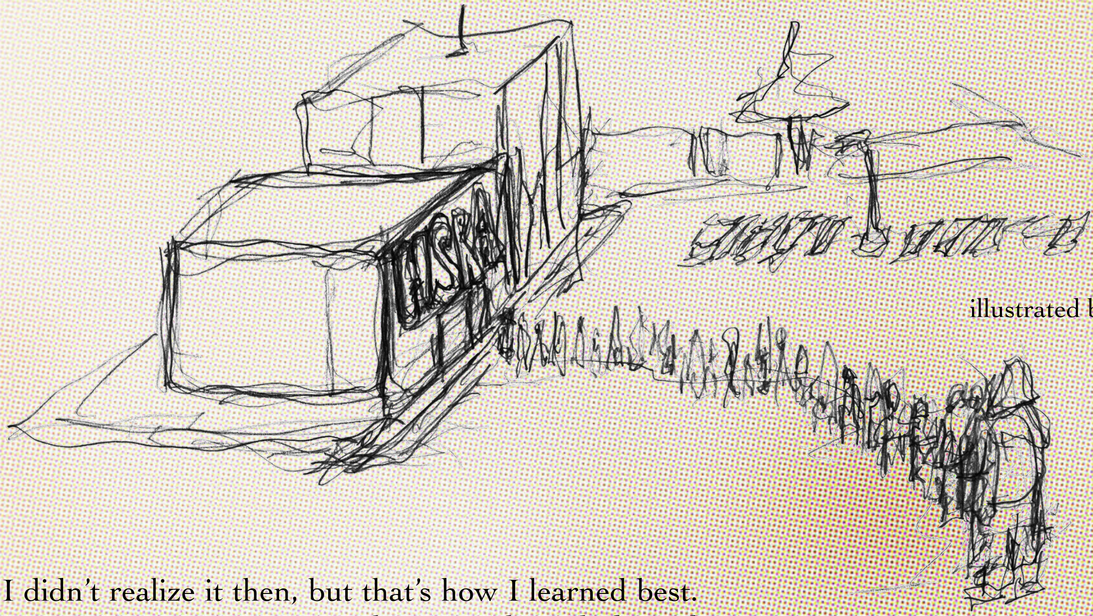
At first I wasn't taking them serious. I kept telling them I had clients coming in. Then one day they called me out. They said, "You said you had a session at two o'clock. It's 2:30. We could've made a hit by now." That one hit me. I laughed because that's exactly how I used to bug Prince when I was trying to get on.

So I let them in. I threw up a beat, and they just went for it. They started writing raps and went straight to the mic. No hesitation. That stunned me because I couldn't do that. I used to need a day or two just to sit with the music and figure out what I wanted to say.

After that, they wanted to know everything I knew. How to publish, how to copyright, how to do work-for-hire. I started sending them to the library. I told them to get the PA or the SR form, fill it out, and send it to the Library of Congress. And they did it. They'd call me like, "What's a PA again?" and I'd tell them, "Performing arts." Or they'd ask, "What's an SR?" and I'd say, "Sound recording."

These were high school kids doing things I didn't learn until my twenties. People might've looked at them and seen thugs or troublemakers, but they were smart. Super intelligent. They were curious and driven, and that reminded me of myself.

When I asked them why they weren't in school, most of them said they got kicked out. They had no interest in going back. That hit home because I was that same kind of student. I got kicked out of all the traditional schools I went to until I ended up at a place called St. Paul Open School. That school changed my life. It was like a hippie school—hands-on, project-based, real-world learning.



illustrated by ***Jordan Lyles***

I didn't realize it then, but that's how I learned best. It was organic, experiential. I saw those kids and recognized the same spark in them that was in me back then. I thought, this could change their lives the same way it changed mine.

One day I read in the paper that my old principal, Dr. Jennings, was opening up charter schools. Minnesota was the first state to create charter schools, and his vision was based on the same kind of open-school model I had gone through. I called him up and told him what was happening with my studio—that all these kids were hanging out and that I thought I could teach them music, business, and life through the studio.

He came out the next day. I told him they could come to the studio, learn publishing, copyrights, and how the music business works. He loved it. He said, "I'll send a teacher from our school to your studio every afternoon. We'll enroll the kids in my school, but instead of coming to the building, they'll come to you."

That was the start of the High School for Recording Arts, or HSRA. We did a pilot program, and within a couple of months we had about fifty kids. Then we had a waiting list. The word spread fast. Everybody wanted to be part of it.

Around that time, my guy Tony, who used to work with me during my Warner Brothers days, started flying in once a month to do boot camps on the business side of music. He'd teach them about publishing, contracts, and royalties. The kids were eating it up. We even started a record label for them called Another Level Records.

Dr. Jennings loved what was happening. He was a radical in the education world. He always said regular school only works for about half the kids, and the other half need something different. He believed in project-based learning and saw what we were doing as one of the most creative things he'd ever witnessed in education."

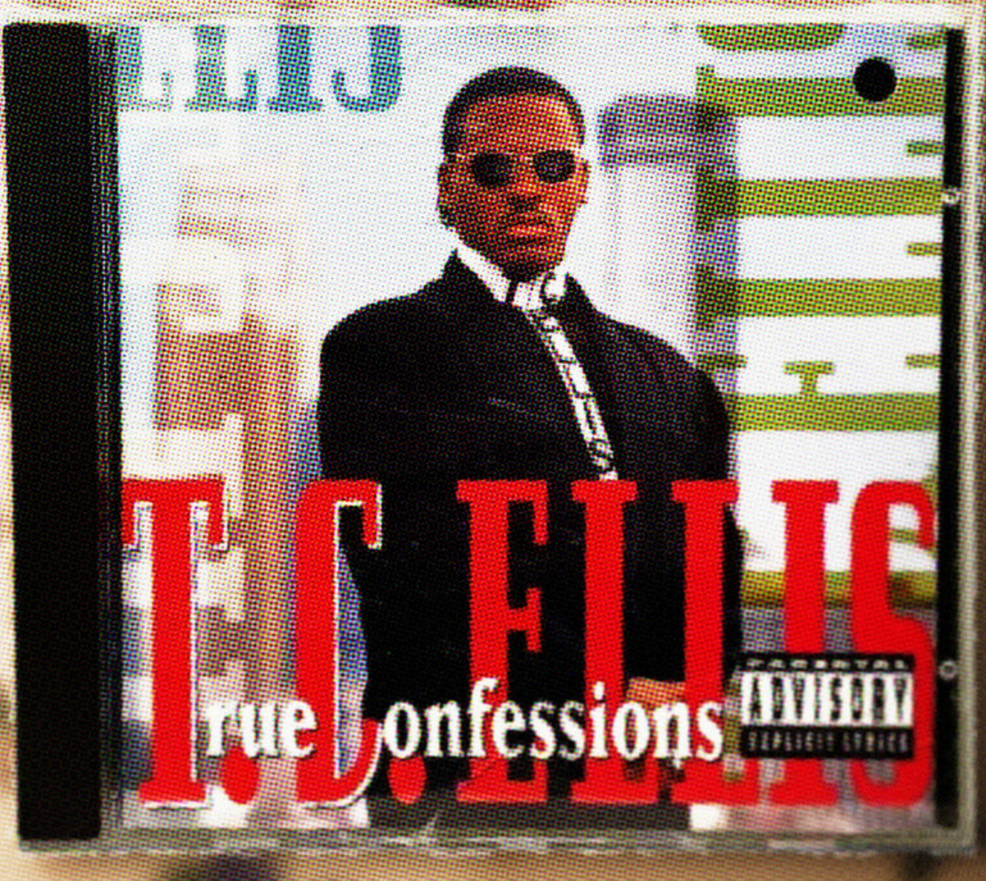
—A conversation with TC.

People love to talk about "being discovered," as if someone just bumps into greatness on accident. That's rarely and almost never how it works. Sometimes... but not with Prince. And definitely not with TC Ellis.

TC didn't get into Prince's world by luck or by knowing the right people. He got in because he wouldn't stop showing up. He hung around Paisley Park, asked questions, helped out, and made it impossible for Prince not to notice him. And he kept asking for one thing. Put me on. Prince wasn't quick to hand out favors, especially when it came to rap, he didn't mess with that 'rap s***'.

TC Ellis and Prince go way back. They didn't meet late in life, they grew up together in Minneapolis. David "TC" Ellis has said as much in interviews: he and Prince rode around in the same car, hung out, and dreamed on the streets of their city. From a young age, TC believed in his rap game and he kept messing with Prince, bugging him over and over, telling him to take hip-hop seriously.

Prince finally gave him a shot, and TC's first big break was a rap verse on the *Batman* soundtrack. That cameo set the tone. He could bring something Prince didn't have in his universe. When True Confessions came around in 1991, that was the moment everything came full circle. Prince took a risk releasing a full hip hop album under Paisley Park. Nobody was doing that in Minneapolis.

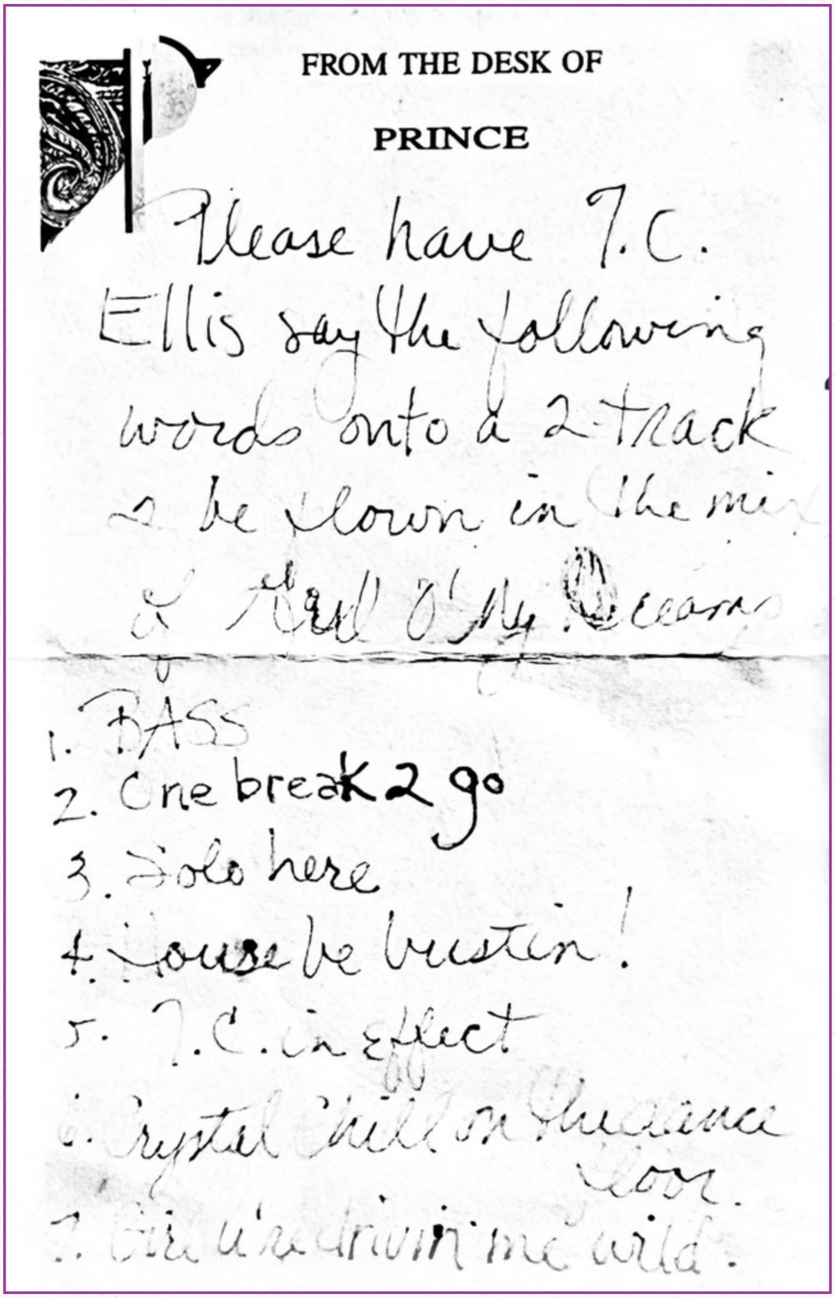


Timing was perfect for TC and his persistence paid off during the *Graffiti Bridge* era. Prince invited TC to appear in the film *Graffiti Bridge*, a kind of sequel to *Purple Rain*. TC didn't just cameo, he wrote and performed a rap in the closing credits of the film. That verse was later released as a remix called "T.C.'s Rap."

"This here rap's about the true confession, if you listen close, you're about to learn a lesson. It's all about life, the way some people live, when it's time to take and when it's time to give. You must know failure before success. Now this is the failure I must confess. I was hanging on to life, trying to deal with this, playing the games and almost got dismissed. Cocaine was the thing that I took on and nowhere was the place that I was going. Now I must tell the truth, I cannot lie I was headed for the kill, steal, destroy and die..."

After tours and living the life of a star, the world shifted. Prince's fight with Warner Bros. became a full-blown war. By 1996, he broke free, officially ending his contract. When Prince cut his ties, Warner lost access to his future and that move didn't just separate Prince from a label. It also meant Warner lost connection to people like TC, whose opportunity came through Paisley Park's relationship with Warner.

And eventually, TC turned that moment into an opportunity for others. He built High School for Recording Arts; a place for young people who needed someone to open the door, just like someone once opened the door for him.



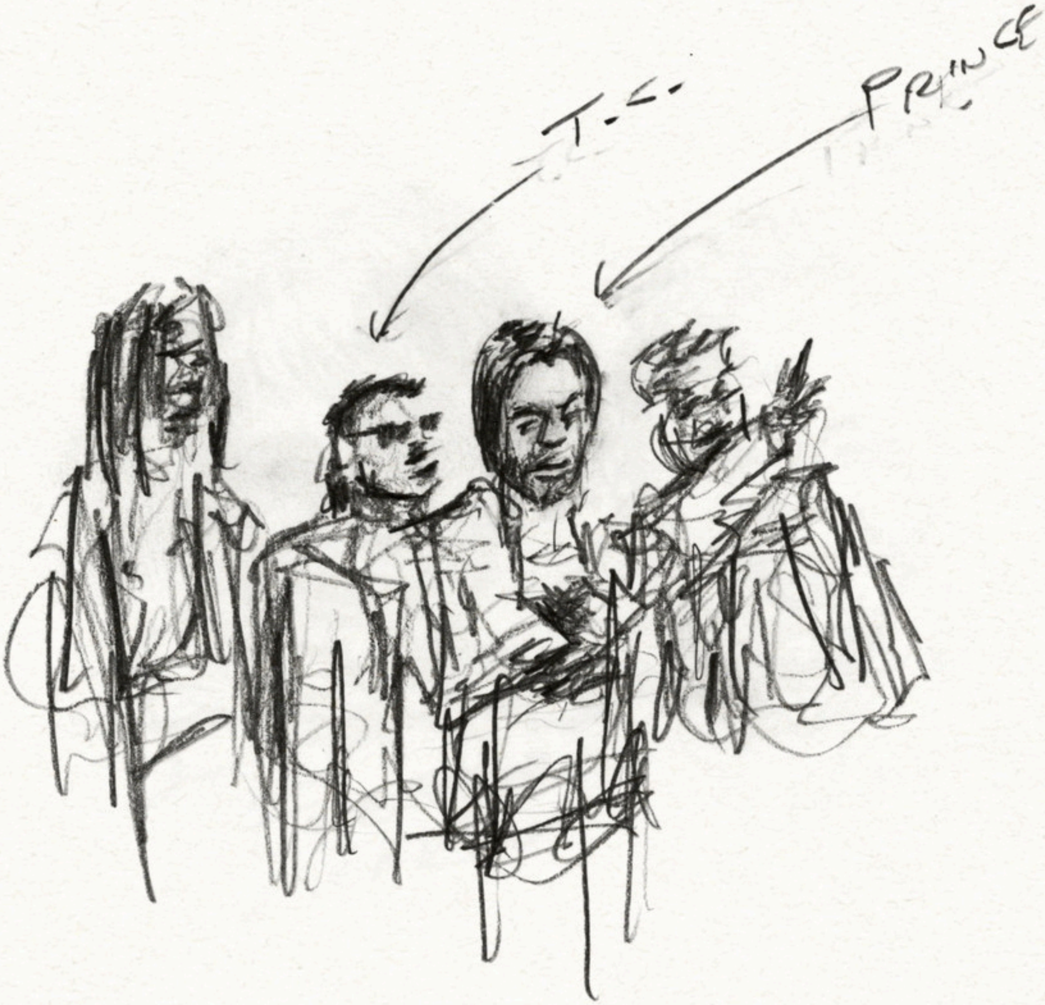
FROM THE DESK OF

PRINCE

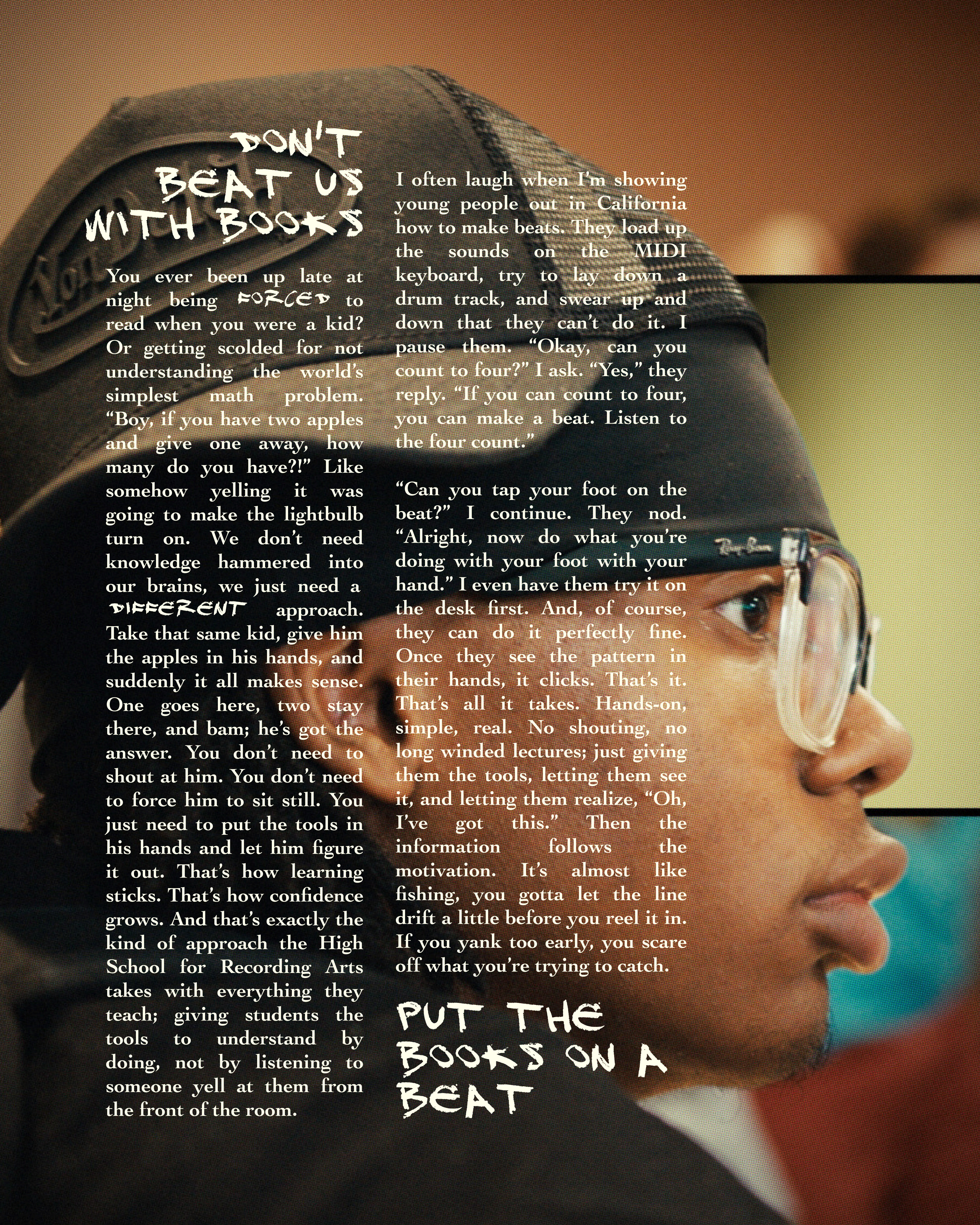
Please have T.C.
Ellis say the following
words onto a 2-track
2 be flown in the mix
of Hall O'My Dreams

1. BASS
2. One break 2 go
3. Solo here
4. House be bustin!
5. T.C. in Effect
6. Crystal Chill on the dance floor.
7. Girl u're drivin me wild.

— *A note to* ***David****, from* ***Prince***



illustrated by ***Jordan Lyles***



DON'T BEAT US WITH BOOKS

You ever been up late at night being FORCED to read when you were a kid? Or getting scolded for not understanding the world's simplest math problem. "Boy, if you have two apples and give one away, how many do you have?!" Like somehow yelling it was going to make the lightbulb turn on. We don't need knowledge hammered into our brains, we just need a DIFFERENT approach. Take that same kid, give him the apples in his hands, and suddenly it all makes sense. One goes here, two stay there, and bam; he's got the answer. You don't need to shout at him. You don't need to force him to sit still. You just need to put the tools in his hands and let him figure it out. That's how learning sticks. That's how confidence grows. And that's exactly the kind of approach the High School for Recording Arts takes with everything they teach; giving students the tools to understand by doing, not by listening to someone yell at them from the front of the room.

I often laugh when I'm showing young people out in California how to make beats. They load up the sounds on the MIDI keyboard, try to lay down a drum track, and swear up and down that they can't do it. I pause them. "Okay, can you count to four?" I ask. "Yes," they reply. "If you can count to four, you can make a beat. Listen to the four count."

"Can you tap your foot on the beat?" I continue. They nod. "Alright, now do what you're doing with your foot with your hand." I even have them try it on the desk first. And, of course, they can do it perfectly fine. Once they see the pattern in their hands, it clicks. That's it. That's all it takes. Hands-on, simple, real. No shouting, no long winded lectures; just giving them the tools, letting them see it, and letting them realize, "Oh, I've got this." Then the information follows the motivation. It's almost like fishing, you gotta let the line drift a little before you reel it in. If you yank too early, you scare off what you're trying to catch.

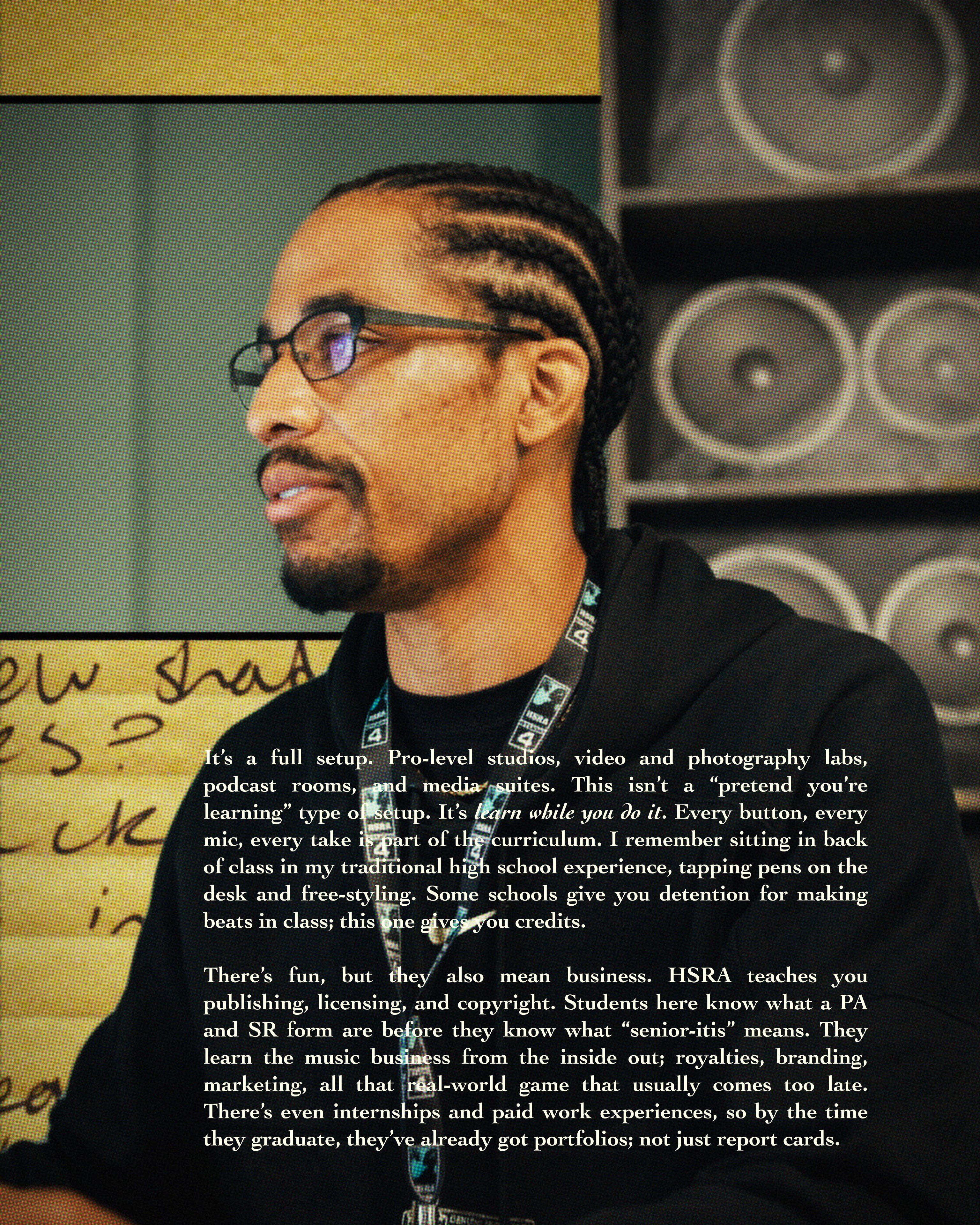
PUT THE BOOKS ON A BEAT

At HSRA, it's not about sitting still and pretending to care. Students earn real high school credits: Math, English, Science, the whole deal; but it's personalized. Everybody's got their own lane. Some are catching up on credits, some are finishing strong, some are balancing life in ways most adults couldn't handle. And the school gets it. Flexible schedules and personalized learning plans; they meet students where they are. Not the other way around; the way it should be.

ARE YOU
PICKING UP
WHAT I'M
PUTTING DOWN?

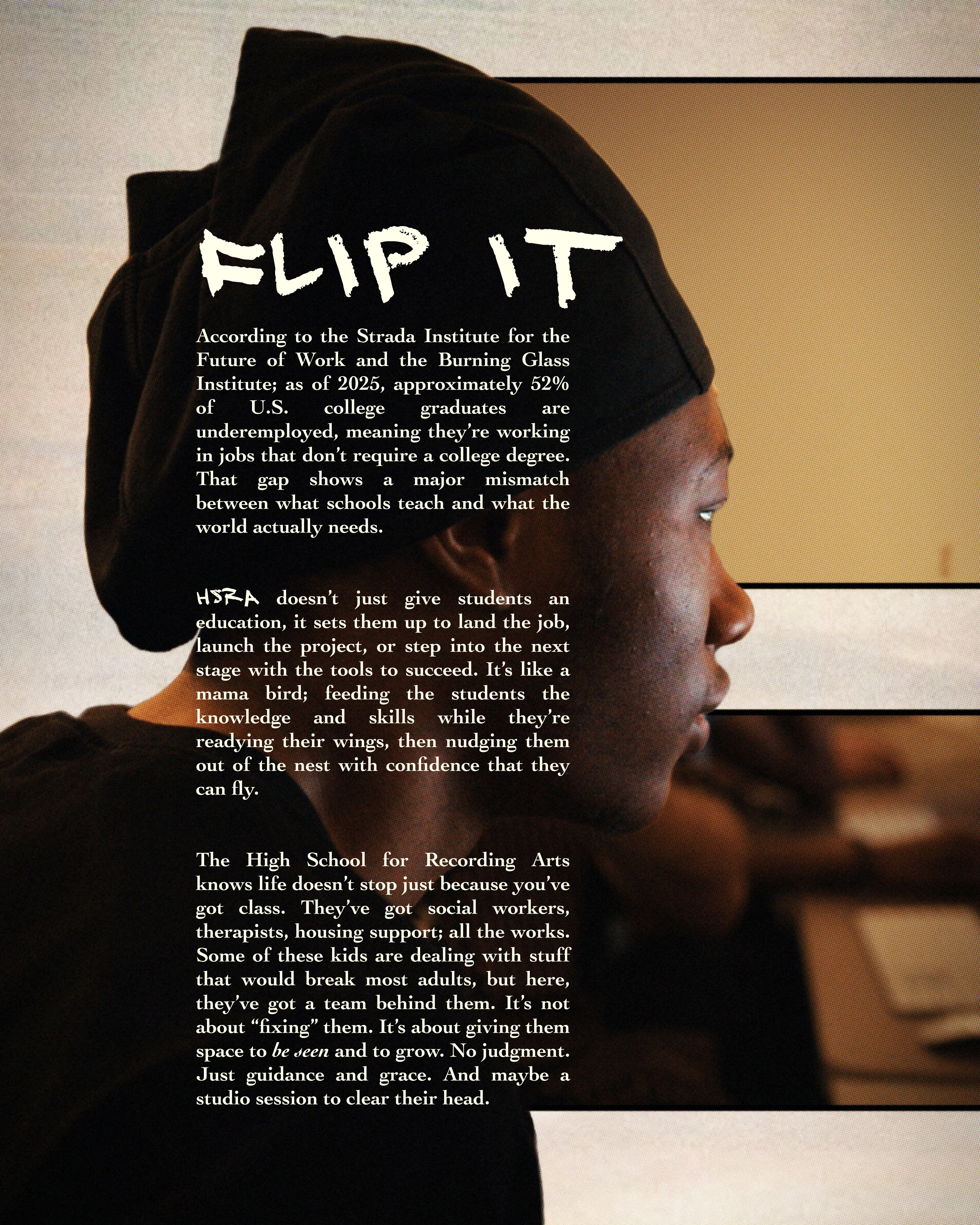
LEND ME YOUR EAR

Let's be real: nobody remembers what was on page 273 of their high school textbook. But you *undoubtedly would* remember that first song you recorded, that short film you shot, that project that actually meant something. That's HSRA. It's hands-on, real-world learning. When you're writing a song; that's English. Mixing a track, believe it or not, that's science and math; just with better sound effects.



It's a full setup. Pro-level studios, video and photography labs, podcast rooms, and media suites. This isn't a "pretend you're learning" type of setup. It's *learn while you do it*. Every button, every mic, every take is part of the curriculum. I remember sitting in back of class in my traditional high school experience, tapping pens on the desk and free-styling. Some schools give you detention for making beats in class; this one gives you credits.

There's fun, but they also mean business. HSRA teaches you publishing, licensing, and copyright. Students here know what a PA and SR form are before they know what "senior-itis" means. They learn the music business from the inside out; royalties, branding, marketing, all that real-world game that usually comes too late. There's even internships and paid work experiences, so by the time they graduate, they've already got portfolios; not just report cards.



FLIP IT

According to the Strada Institute for the Future of Work and the Burning Glass Institute; as of 2025, approximately 52% of U.S. college graduates are underemployed, meaning they're working in jobs that don't require a college degree. That gap shows a major mismatch between what schools teach and what the world actually needs.

HSRA doesn't just give students an education, it sets them up to land the job, launch the project, or step into the next stage with the tools to succeed. It's like a mama bird; feeding the students the knowledge and skills while they're readying their wings, then nudging them out of the nest with confidence that they can fly.

The High School for Recording Arts knows life doesn't stop just because you've got class. They've got social workers, therapists, housing support; all the works. Some of these kids are dealing with stuff that would break most adults, but here, they've got a team behind them. It's not about "fixing" them. It's about giving them space to *be seen* and to grow. No judgment. Just guidance and grace. And maybe a studio session to clear their head.

STUDIO
4
BEAT LA

LIKE A JAMES BROWN SAMPLE

At the High School for Recording Arts (HSRA), STEAM doesn't mean steamed broccoli… it stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math. But unlike vegetables, students actually *want* to digest it.

"We're gonna have to take this and flip it." — James Brown from the Biopic '*Get On Up*'.

That's exactly what the High School for Recording Arts did. They took a system where young people were told they'd "never make it" and flipped it. Gave them a mic, a mentor, and a mission.

High School for Recording Arts
Family, Community, Respect, & Education
📍 St. Paul, Minnesota | www.hsra.org

CHECK YO' SELF

don't be CHI - let's talk about it

Charlnitta "MAMA CHI" Ellis is the Director of the Check Yo' Self Health & Wellness Center at High School for Recording Arts. For the past 18 years, the Check Yo' Self Health & Wellness Center has provided education and outreach services targeted toward African American youth, ages 13-24. The Check Yo' Self Health & Wellness Center utilizes a peer education intervention model using natural social networks among young people to disseminate HIV/AIDS/STD and teen pregnancy prevention information and awareness education.

MS. ELLIS is also the co-founder of the African American Health Workers Network, a group of healthcare professionals convened for the purpose of networking and providing community members and institutions with information and resources regarding health issues. Other community organizations Ms. Ellis has served in leadership positions include, but are not limited to: a member of the Council of Queens (African American Women Activists for Peace); National Black Women's Health Project (NBWHP); National Minority AIDS Council; Upper Midwest AIDS Coalition (UMAC); Women Instrumentally Involved Supporting the Determined Direction of MARCH (W.I.^{2}S.D.^{2}O.M.); Men Are Responsible for Cultivating Hope; and Women of Color Health Alternative Network (WOCHAN).

Check Yo' Self Health & Wellness Center | Organized by ***Charlnitta 'Mama Chi' Ellis***

MAGNUM
MAGNUM
MAGNUM
MAGNUM

...OR SAVE YO' SELF

This generation of young people are battling a different kind of beast when it comes to influence. And it's not their fault. Social media has become the new adult magazine, except it's far more explicit and it's force feeding them 24 hours a day. They are growing up inside the most sexualized version of society to ever exist.

The idea of **saving yourself for marriage** is treated like a joke now. Taboo. Old-fashioned. Unrealistic. Some households still try to teach it, but most young people never had the luxury of someone actually explaining *why* saving yourself matters in the first place. Most only hear the rules, never the reasons.

And let's be honest: not everybody believes the same thing. Prayer has been taken out of schools. The Bible has been reduced to a place where all it's good for is copying your favorite scripture in a bio. And somewhere along the way, the idea of actually living by those teachings got lost.

Some people believe in God. Some don't. This isn't about debating that. Because whether or not Barney was a real dinosaur doesn't change the values the TV show was teaching: share, don't hit people, be kind. Morals stand even when you disagree with the source.

So when it comes to sexual integrity, not shame, not fear, but integrity; the wisdom has been in front of us for thousands of years. And it's not outdated. It's not irrelevant. It's not "church talk." It's protection and structure.

Hebrews 13:4
Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

1 Corinthians 7:2
But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

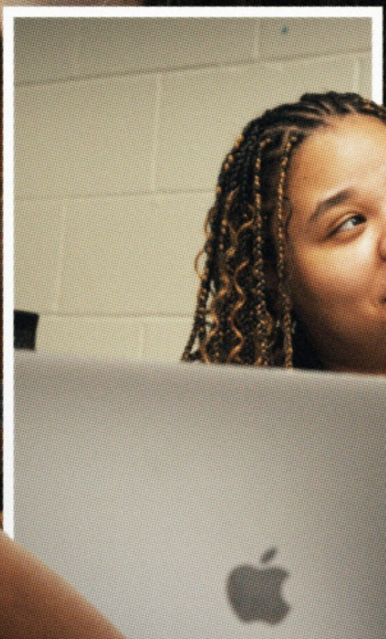
These aren't verses meant to control. They're verses meant to keep the heart, the mind, and the body from being pulled in every direction by urges society keeps feeding. Young people today aren't lost because they're bad. They're lost because nobody bothered to explain the map.

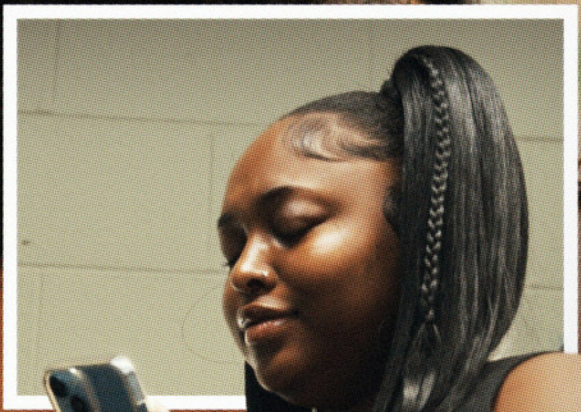
Put plainly, these instructions recognize human nature. Sex is powerful and messy when mixed with emotions, expectations, and broken trust. The guidance to wait until marriage is about giving yourself to someone who's legally, socially, and spiritually committed to you.

It's about avoiding the emotional fallout, the confusion, and the sense of being used that casual sex can leave behind.

Casual sex isn't just a personal choice anymore, it's a cultural norm that media constantly pushes. Movies, TV shows, music videos, TikToks, and even commercials treat hookups like background noise, a fun side plot, or a badge of social status. It's normalized to the point where abstaining feels unusual or old-fashioned. The narrative is everywhere: "Do what you want, when you want, with whoever you want," and there's rarely any consequence shown. If you're thinking about casual sex, ask yourself why. Is it excitement? Peer pressure? Social media telling you it's normal, expected, even glamorous? Take a moment to be honest. What are you really getting from it and what are you giving away? Your emotions, your clarity, your sense of self aren't unlimited. Each time you hand pieces of yourself to someone who may not value them, you're making it harder to keep your heart whole.

And yes, I know statistics are brutal; maybe one in every hundred kids will actually stick to abstinence because we live in a world where raising a child with someone is seen as less of a commitment than marrying the person you had the child with.





THROW YOUR CAPS

Located in St. Paul, Minnesota, the High School for Recording Arts (HSRA) is no ordinary public charter school. Serving students in grades 9-12, HSRA specializes in reaching young people who have been expelled, pushed out, or disconnected from traditional schools. Through hip hop culture, music, dance, art, and entrepreneurialism, and other forms of creative expression, students develop life skills in ways that feel real and relevant.

The school operates within two professional recording studios, giving students hands-on experience that aligns with their talents and passions.

What began with 15 learners has grown to a stable enrollment of 225, the school's target size.

To graduate, students must master Minnesota's content standards, complete required coursework, and accomplish the six HSRA validations; a unique system of proving skills in real-world contexts. Over the last five years, 90% of seniors have graduated. In the last ten years, 100% of graduates were accepted into college, with FAFSA applications fully completed.

- **Gender:** 59% male / 41% female
- **Average Age at Enrollment:** 17
- **Income:** 92% live at or below the poverty line; 92% qualify for free or reduced-fee lunches; 40% are or recently were homeless.
- **Ethnicities:** 86% Black, 6% Caucasian, 4% Hispanic, 4% American Indian, 0.3% Asian
- **Geography:** 52% St. Paul, 29% Minneapolis, 19% other Minnesota cities

HSRA's **Another Level Records (ALR)** is the nation's **longest-running student-operated record and production company**. Students explore the music industry firsthand: Discovering and recording artists. Producing promotional and media content. Negotiating contracts, publishing, and copyrighting music. Designing and marketing recording projects, campaigns, and merchandise.

IN THA AIR

Meanwhile, **Studio 4 Tha Air**, a weekly half-hour student-run show, connects learners worldwide through live performances and interviews. Past guests include **Ice Cube, Yasiin Bey (Mos Def), D. Smoke, Michael Eric Dyson**, and local community leaders. Podcasts are available on **iTunes and Spotify**.

HATS OFF 2 U

At HSRA, it's about more than a diploma. It's about voice, vision, and agency, giving students the tools, the guidance, and the studio time to flip the script on traditional education and claim their place in the world.

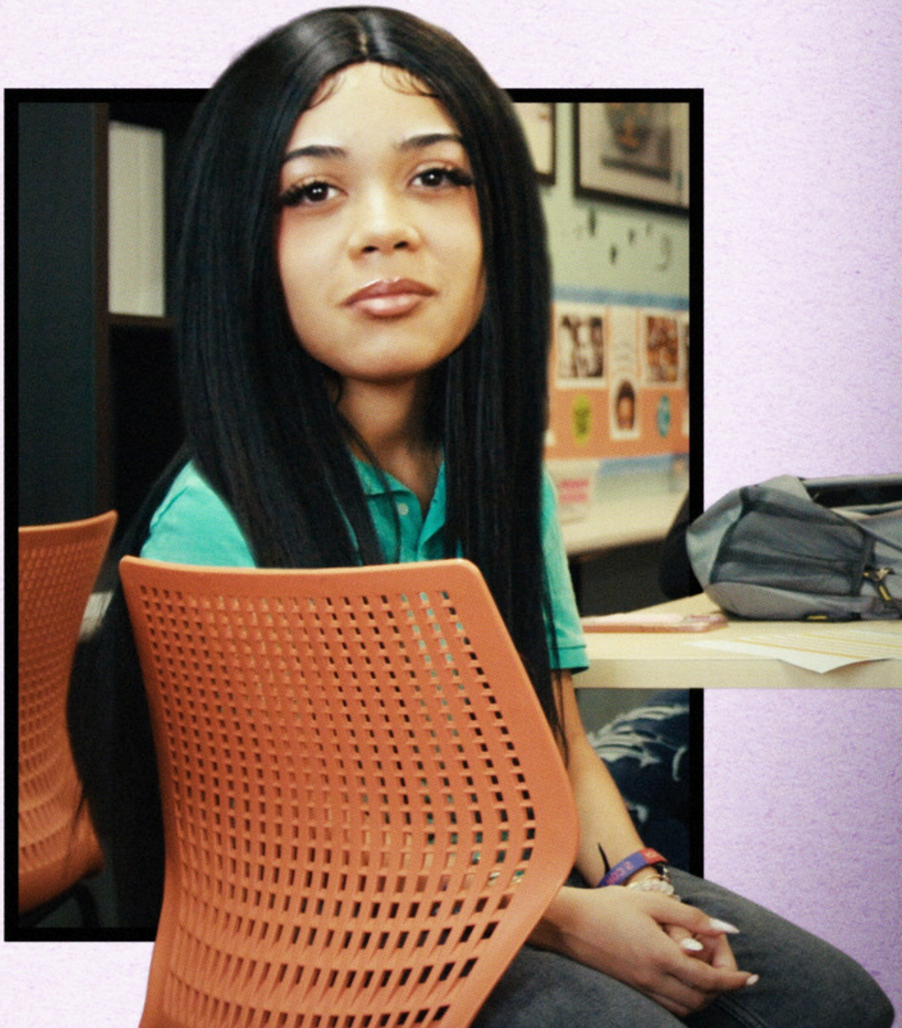
HSRA partners with organizations that **wear different hats** to amplify learning and support student success, including: Pillsbury United Communities, Minnesota Learner-Centered Network, Education Reimagined, Fielding International, High Tech High Graduate School of Education, Hamline University, University of Minnesota, Bridgemakers, and more. These collaborations ensure students get mentorship, resources, as well as real-world connections that extend far beyond the classroom.

225

That's The Limit.

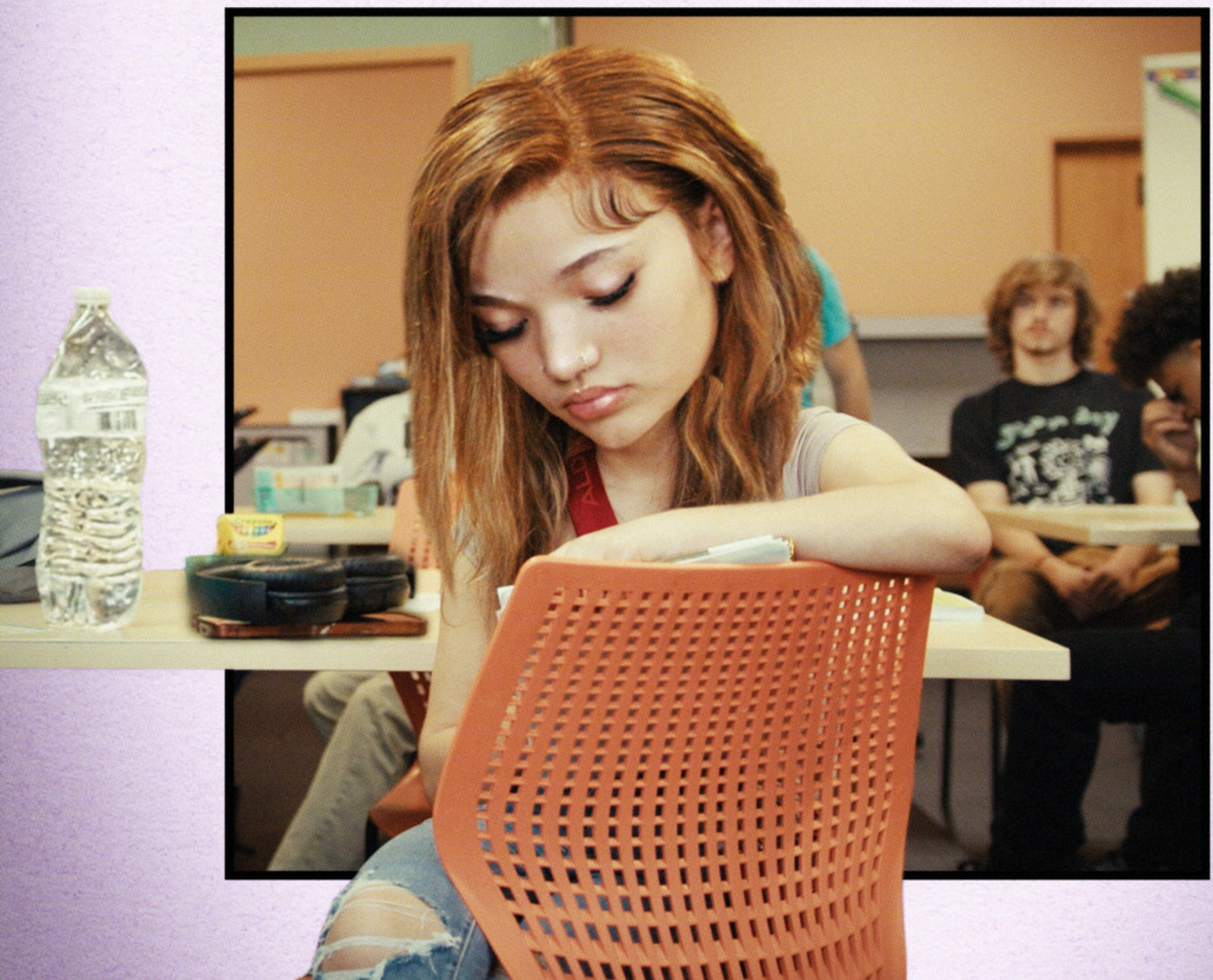
HSRA works with partners who actually bring something to the table. Real internships, real jobs, real projects. Not the kind of "experiences" schools invent just to brag about in pamphlets nobody reads. Fund-raising is growing too.

In 2023, the school pulled in two hundred fifteen thousand dollars to push toward middle school expansion. And no matter how things grow, HSRA stays small on purpose. Capping at 225 students keeps the culture tight.



LET'S NOT ——— GET BIG HEADED.

Every year the school runs a full self-audit on its culture. Who better to check if you're still living up to your own standards than the people inside the building living it every day. Students, staff, and the adults who show up are the ones who call it out if things are on track or swaying off. It is basically the school version of looking at their reflection to see if there's spinach in your teeth. You know, a lil' Michael Jackson, a lil' *Man in The Mirror*. With all the reason to walk in confidence, HSRA never let's past success go to their head.



Hands touch a lot of things. Door handles, toilet handles, pens, pencils, other hands, gas pumps, money, steering wheels, phones, the list goes on. If we're using them for all that, using them for learning doesn't seem like a bad idea.

People love asking, "What kind of learner are you?" Visual? Auditory? These are beautiful ways to learn but I imagine no method beats hands on learning, with the exception of those with handicaps.

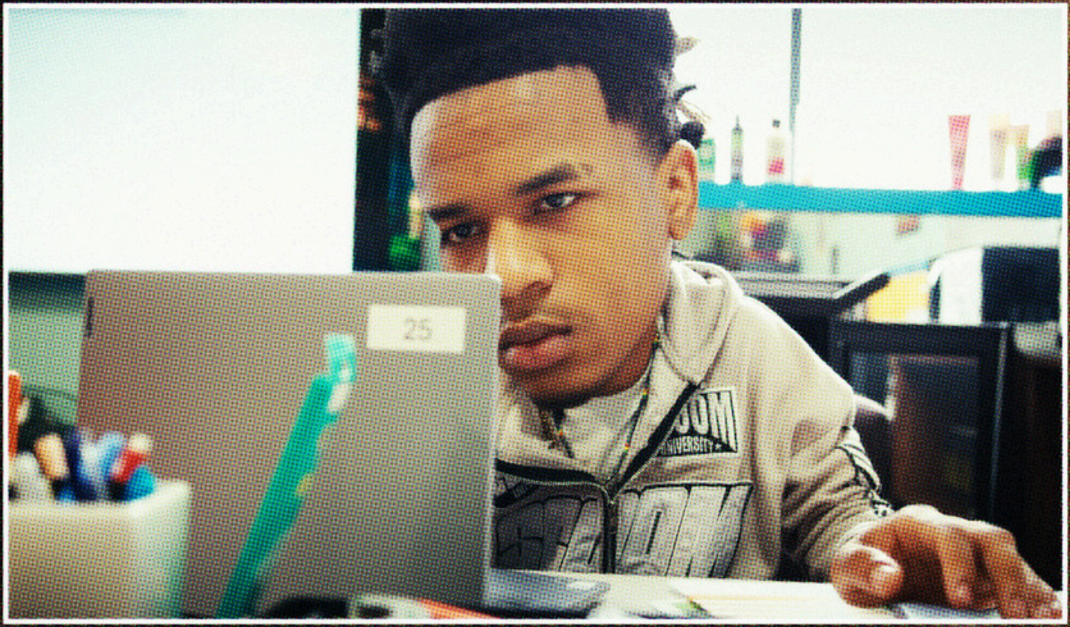
But not so literal.. more so the act of doing a thing.

According to experiential learning data collected by education research platforms, up to 75% of students who do hands-on learning report better retention of information compared to more traditional lesson styles. At HSRA, hands-on learning isn't a gimmick, it's how understanding sticks. Twisting knobs, playing chords, building projects, testing ideas; these are not exercises in vanity. Mistakes hurt a little more, but wins feel more real, and knowledge doesn't evaporate once the assignment is turned in. Hands carry what the brain can't always hold. They are proof of work, proof of learning, and proof that you actually did something.

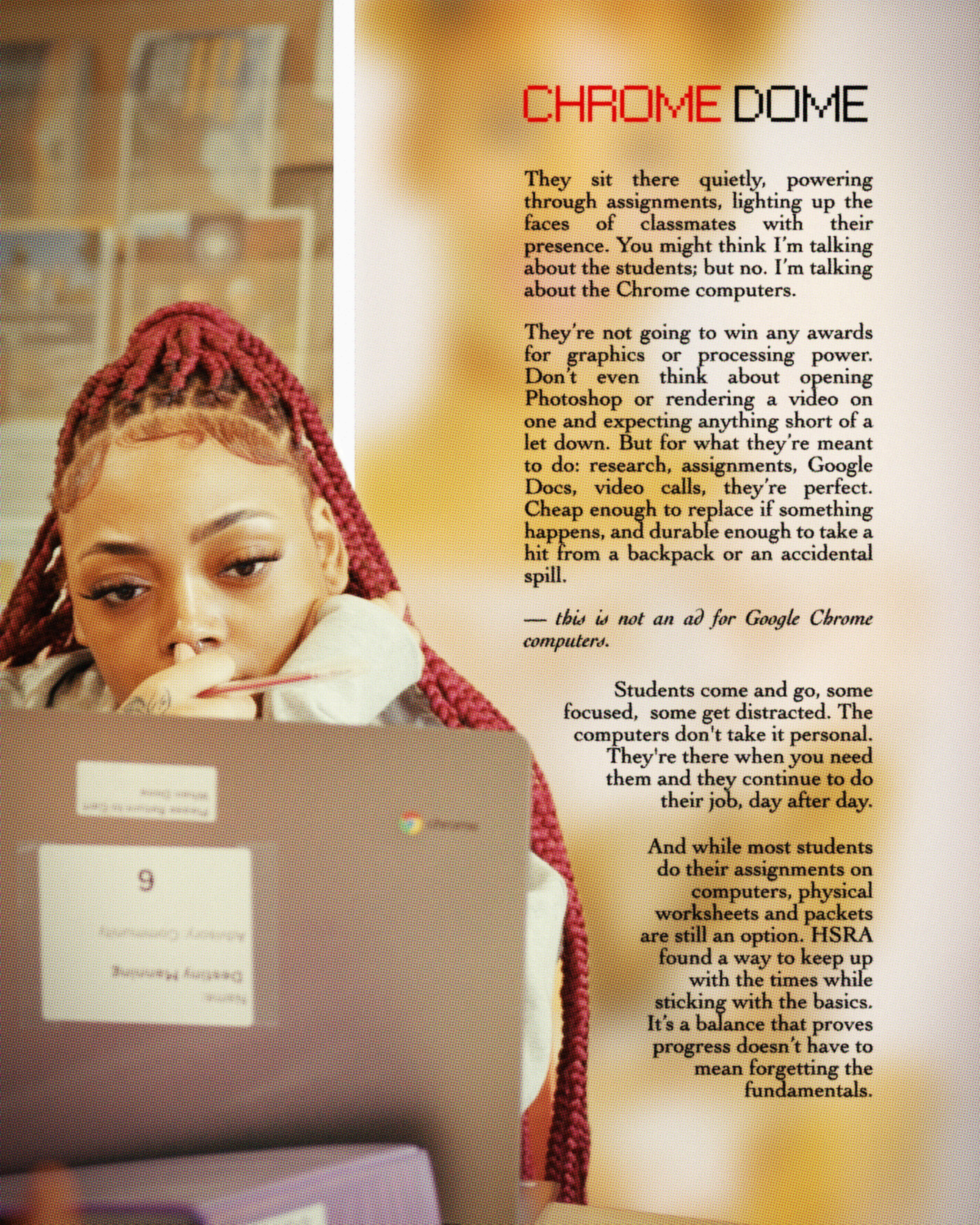
Hey Google, play "Computer Love" by Zapp & Roger. High School for Recording Arts now offers a fully online school option for students beginning in the 2025-2026 school year called HSRA Online. Same school, same standards, just without making students sit in a chair for eight hours a day. It's fully accredited, lets students earn a real diploma from anywhere.

The HSRA Online Program provides a dynamic and flexible educational experience tailored for students passionate about music, media, and creative expression. Rooted in a culture of equity, innovation, and empowerment, HSRA Online empowers learners to earn a fully accredited high school diploma from anywhere, while immersing them in the world of recording arts and digital media.

to see the whol



— *Fun Fact:* The first internet message was an incomplete attempt to type "LOGIN" that crashed after the letters "LO," and the first webcam was created to monitor a coffee pot at Cambridge University. The official "birthday" of the internet is January 1, 1983, when ARPANET switched to the TCP/IP standard, and the first email was sent in 1974 by Ray Tomlinson, who reportedly doesn't remember what he wrote.



CHROME DOME

They sit there quietly, powering through assignments, lighting up the faces of classmates with their presence. You might think I'm talking about the students; but no. I'm talking about the Chrome computers.

They're not going to win any awards for graphics or processing power. Don't even think about opening Photoshop or rendering a video on one and expecting anything short of a let down. But for what they're meant to do: research, assignments, Google Docs, video calls, they're perfect. Cheap enough to replace if something happens, and durable enough to take a hit from a backpack or an accidental spill.

— this is not an ad for Google Chrome computers.

Students come and go, some focused, some get distracted. The computers don't take it personal. They're there when you need them and they continue to do their job, day after day.

And while most students do their assignments on computers, physical worksheets and packets are still an option. HSRA found a way to keep up with the times while sticking with the basics. It's a balance that proves progress doesn't have to mean forgetting the fundamentals.

"My mama always said, 'Life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get.'" — Forrest Gump.

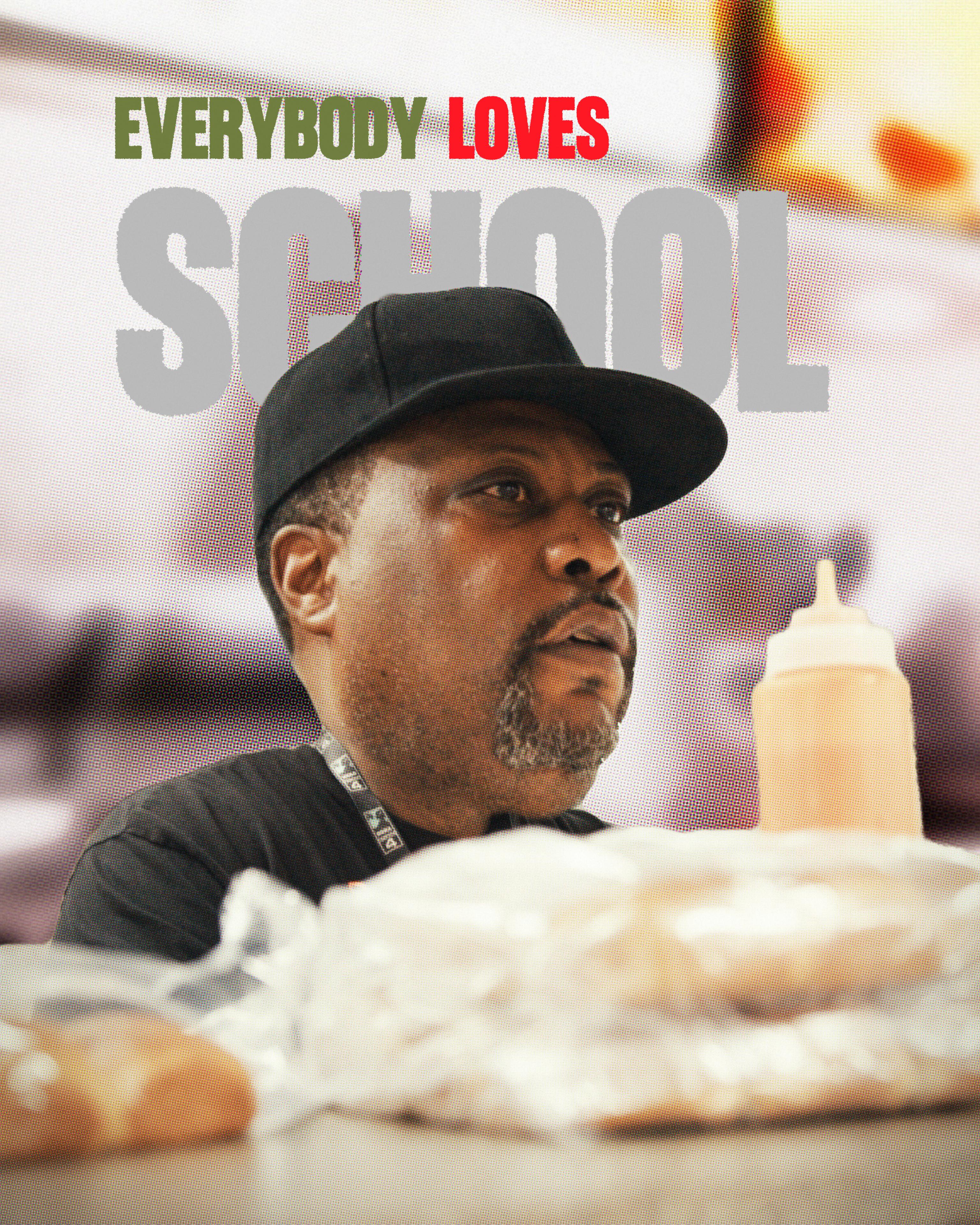
Life shows up with all kinds of surprises within the sweet moments and the bitter lessons. Instead of pretending life is predictable, HSRA teaches students how to navigate that uncertainty with strength and purpose. Their four values; ***Family, Respect, Community, Education***, act as the steady hand guiding young people through whatever life serves.

Family provides stability when everything feels random. **Respect** gives a sense of dignity. **Community** reminds students they're not facing the world alone. And the *type* of **Education** provided gives them the tools to understand their experiences and build a future beyond them.

Family. Respect. Community. Education

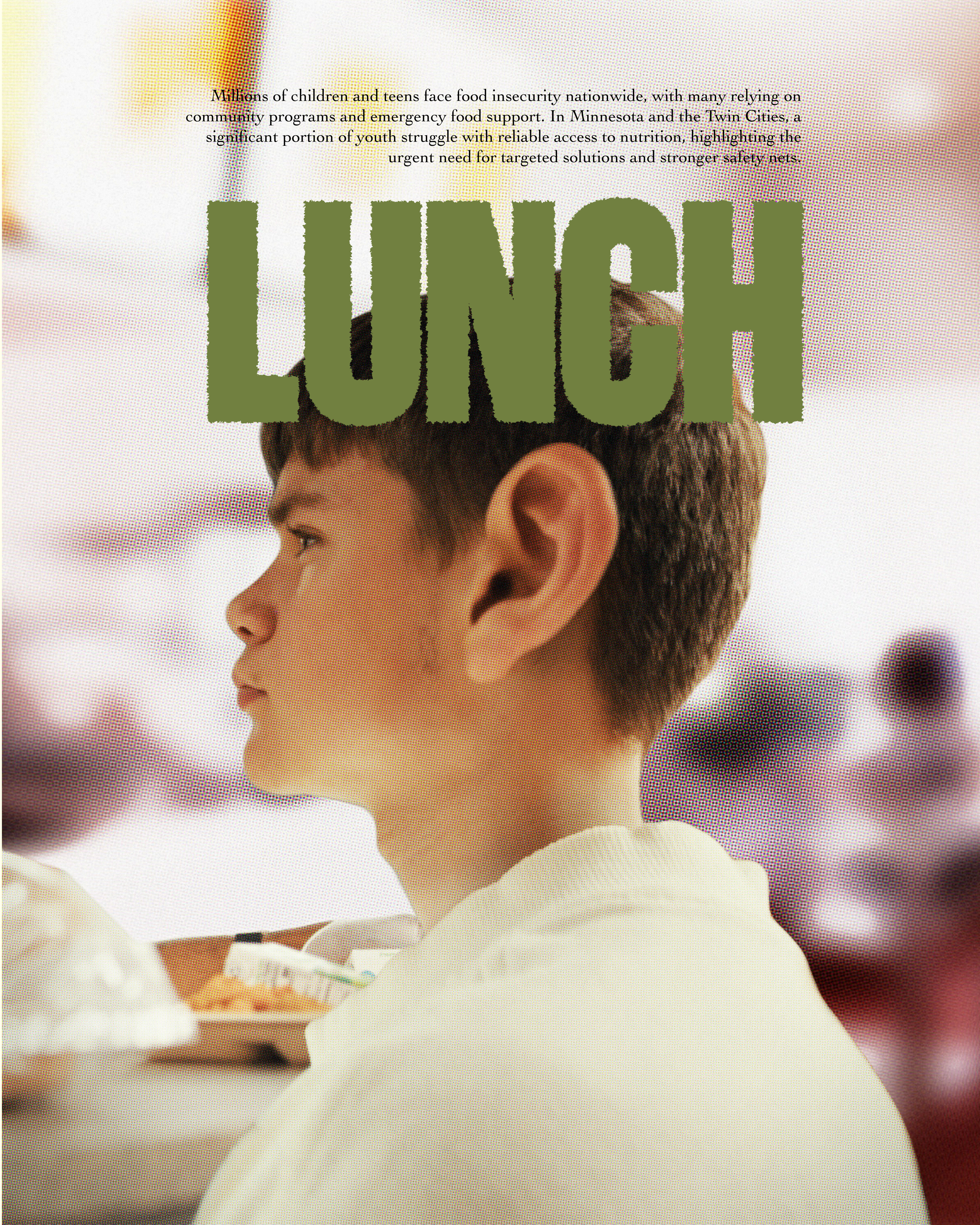
VALUES

EVERYBODY LOVES SCHOOL



Millions of children and teens face food insecurity nationwide, with many relying on community programs and emergency food support. In Minnesota and the Twin Cities, a significant portion of youth struggle with reliable access to nutrition, highlighting the urgent need for targeted solutions and stronger safety nets.

LUNCH



Food insecurity among youth is a pressing issue across the United States. In 2023, **17.9% of households with children**, which is roughly 6.5 million families, experienced food insecurity at some point, translating to **over 13 million children** facing uncertain access to adequate nutrition. Teens are particularly affected, with an estimated **6.8 million youth** living in food-insecure households, and **2.9 million experiencing very low food security**, according to the Urban Institute. Food insecurity doesn't just mean hunger; it's linked to skipped meals, poorer nutrition, behavioral challenges, and long-term health risks.

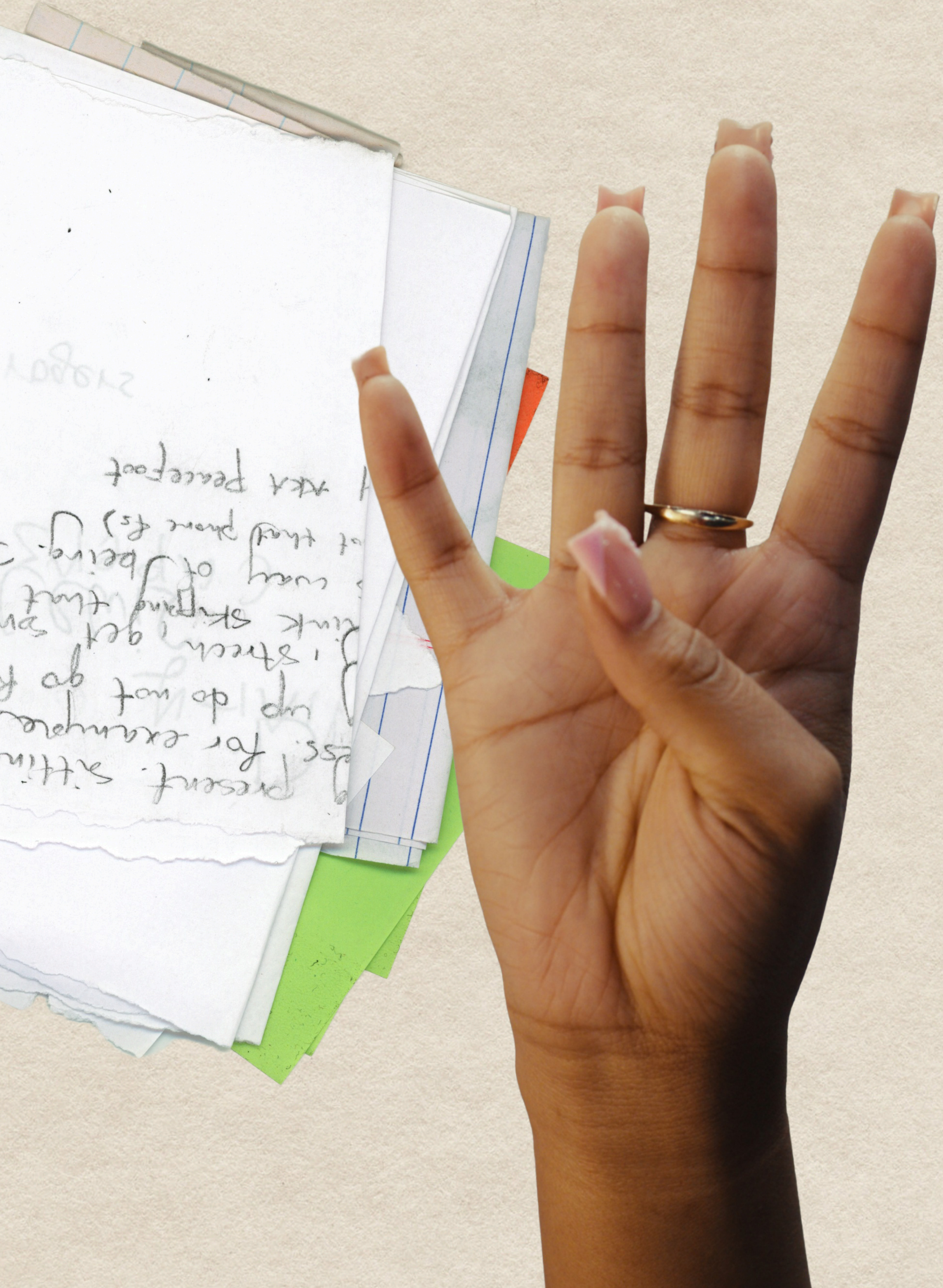
Minnesota reflects similar concerns, though rates vary across the state. In 2024, a statewide survey found that **26% of Minnesota households with children** experienced food insecurity, and children accounted for **36% of visits to food shelves**. In the Twin Cities metro area, approximately **1 in 8 residents** face food insecurity, highlighting that even urban centers with stronger social services are not immune. University of Minnesota research shows that nearly **one in four young people** in the state experienced food insecurity at some point during adolescence. These numbers underscore a reliance on community support and emergency food programs, and they highlight the ongoing challenge of ensuring that all youth have reliable access to the nutrition they need.

HSRA provides a range of food resources to ensure that students have reliable access to nutrition, recognizing that many come from vulnerable or food-insecure households. The school offers **wraparound support**, including food, clothing, and housing assistance, helping students meet their basic needs so they can focus on learning and personal growth. In addition, HSRA connects students with **local food shelves and hot meal providers**, often in partnership with organizations like **2-Harvest**, which works to reduce child hunger in Minnesota. Thanks to Minnesota's universal free school meals program, all students at HSRA also have access to **free breakfast and lunch** through the National School Lunch Program.

Juicy Juice

HSRA also offers a variety of nutritious and flavorful lunch options for students. Some favorites include the **Louisiana Chicken Sandwich** on a whole-grain bun with pickles and New Orleans sauce, the **Burrito Bowl** with brown rice, seasoned beef, shredded cheese, lettuce, and CKC Youza sauce, and **Chicken Biryani** served with yogurt sauce and a crisp mixed greens salad. Students can also enjoy classic options like the **All-Beef Hot Dog** with Doritos, the **Golden Corn Dog** with baked beans, or **Boneless Chicken Wings** with a whole-grain roll and broccoli and carrots.

For taco lovers, HSRA serves **Chicken Carnitas Tacos** with jalapeño pickles and sour cream, while **Meatball Subs** come with Sun Chips and ranchero corn salad. Other menu items include **Lemony Garlic Chicken** over cilantro rice, **Brunch Lunch** with French toast sticks, berries, and sliced cucumbers with dip, and **Pizza Fridays** featuring cheese and veggie pizza. Gluten free options are also available and all meals are served with juice and milk, ensuring students get taste and nutrition.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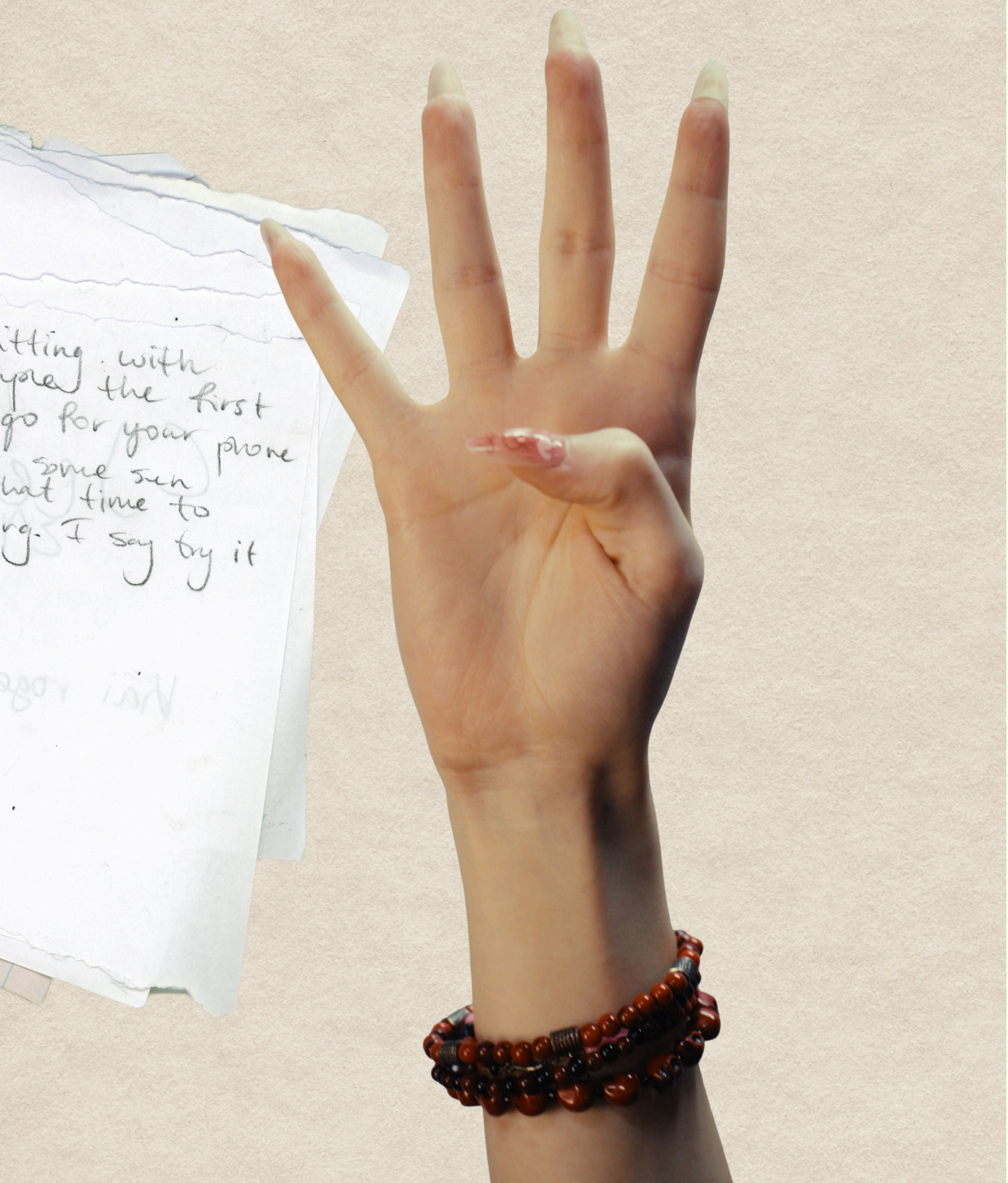
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HSRA
STUDIO
HSRA
STUDIO 4

STAFF OF HSRA

class of 2025

"From Atlantic City to the Twin Cities"

Article by Jordan Lyles.

Tony is one of those people you can tell God positioned long before anybody understood why. His path didn't start in a classroom or a boardroom. It started in entertainment law, representing national recording artists. That work is what placed him at a music conference in Atlantic City in the mid 1990s. He almost didn't go. He has said he only drove down there because a friend pushed him to make the trip.

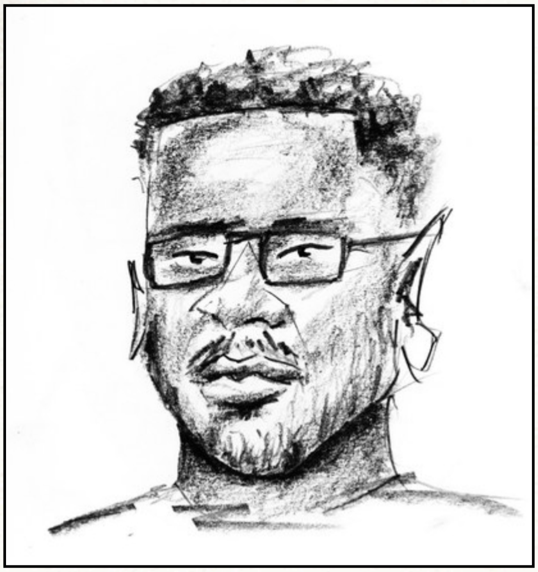
When he finally sat at a table full of artists trying to break into the industry, he met a young man from the Twin Cities who introduced himself as David "TC" Ellis. TC told Tony he had just released an album called "True Confessions". Tony has said from that very first moment he could tell TC was hip hop in the truest sense. Not just because of image or sound, but because of his persistence, his lived experience, and the way he spoke about music and community. That conversation was the spark.

What began as Tony offering legal help eventually grew into something much bigger. Their connection helped birth Studio 4 and ultimately the High School for Recording Arts, a place that has changed the lives of young people who are usually counted out before they even get a chance. Tony helped co-found Another Level Records, the first national student run record label, because he believed students deserved real ownership and real agency. He did not hover over them. He handed them the steering wheel.

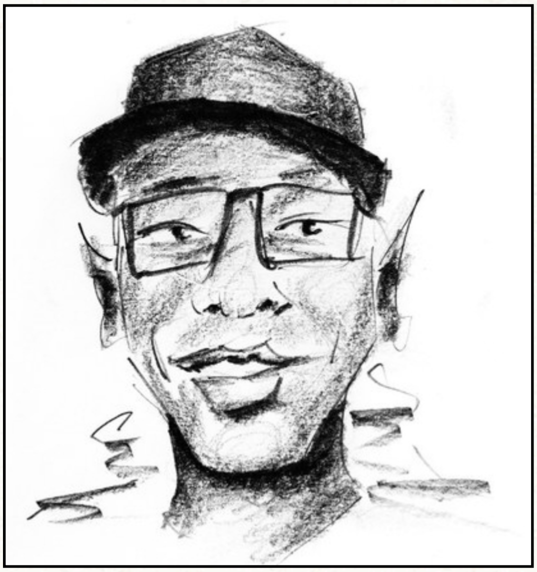
Over time, the school grew into a consistent environment for young people who needed a different kind of structure. Students were able to come in, learn, create, and find direction through pathways connected to music and production. What started as a small idea developed into a full institution that has supported students for decades.The growth of the school also created jobs for adults who wanted to support young people in meaningful ways. Teachers, mentors, administrators, artists, and support staff found a place where their work mattered and where they could build strong relationships with students. The school became a community of people who cared about youth development and wanted to help students move forward both academically and personally.

The meeting between Tony and TC was not designed to build a school, but it set everything in motion. A single conversation in Atlantic City became the seed for a place that has given young people a pathway and has provided steady, purpose driven employment for a team of committed adults.

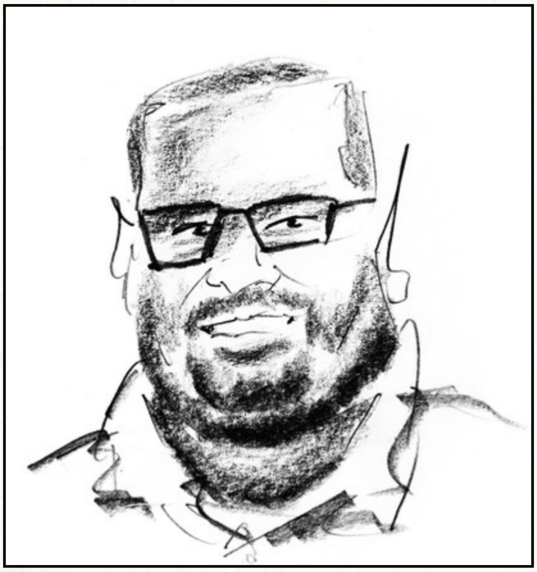
Staff



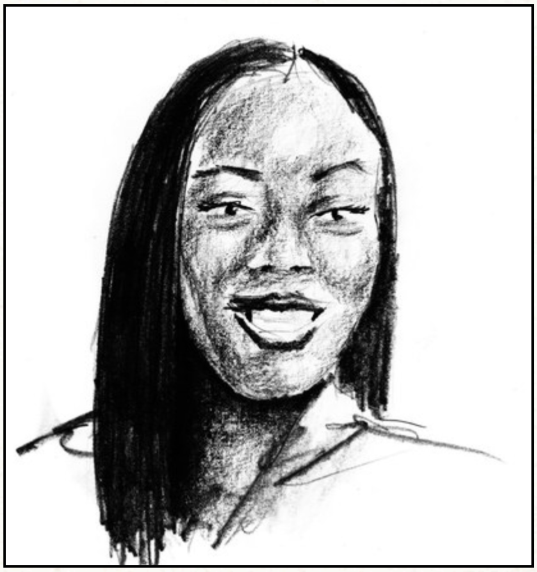
David "TC" Ellis
Founder



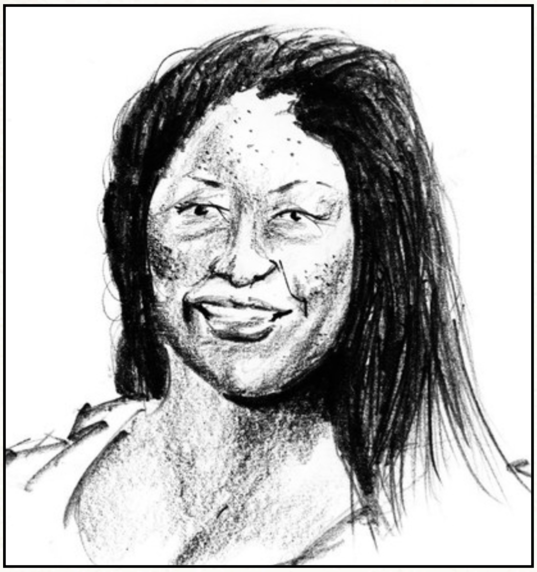
Tony Simmons
Executive Director



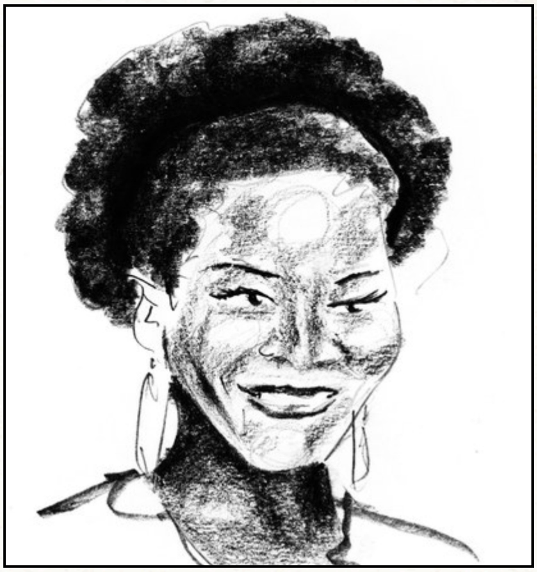
Matthew Brown
Director of Operations



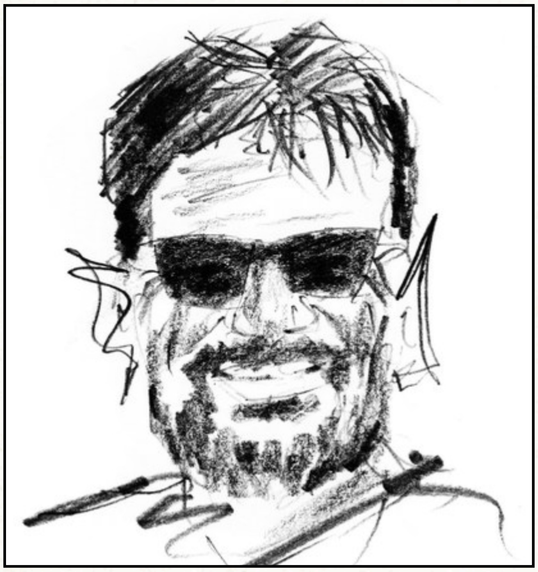
Fatima Womack
Dean of Culture



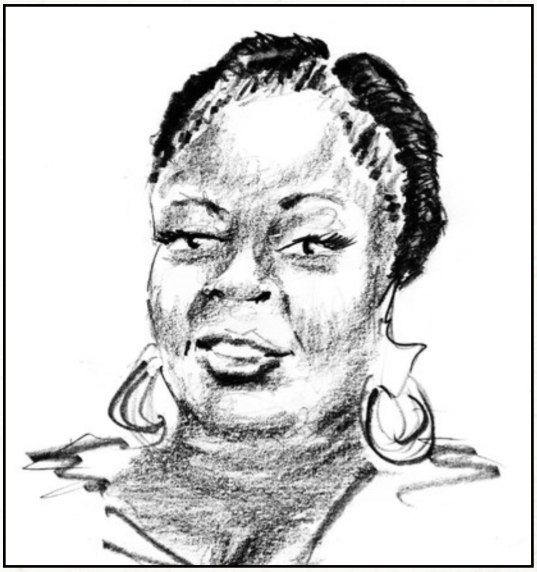
Maureen Foss
Director of Educational
and Institutional Activities



Saintanne Tipton
Assistant Director of
Operations



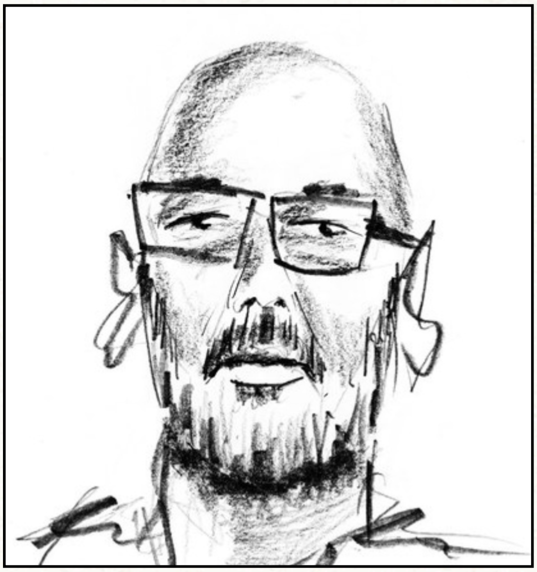
Norbert Kreuzer
Director of Diverse
Media Institute



Charlnitta Ellis
CYS Program Director

Staff

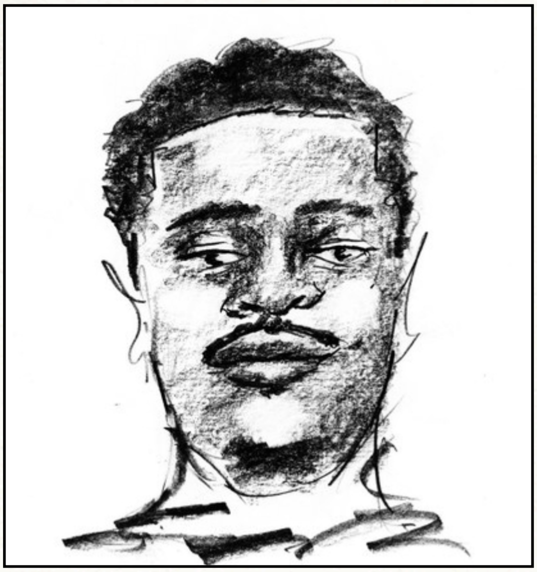
Walter Womack
Assistant Director of
Student Support



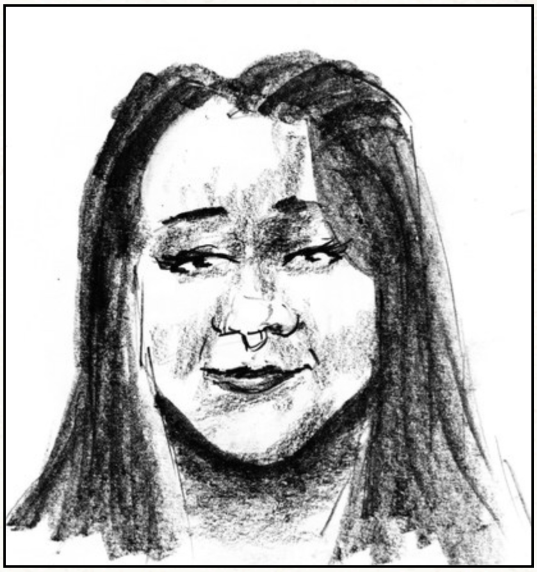
Phil Wenden
Studio Director

Bonnie Hughes
Business Manager

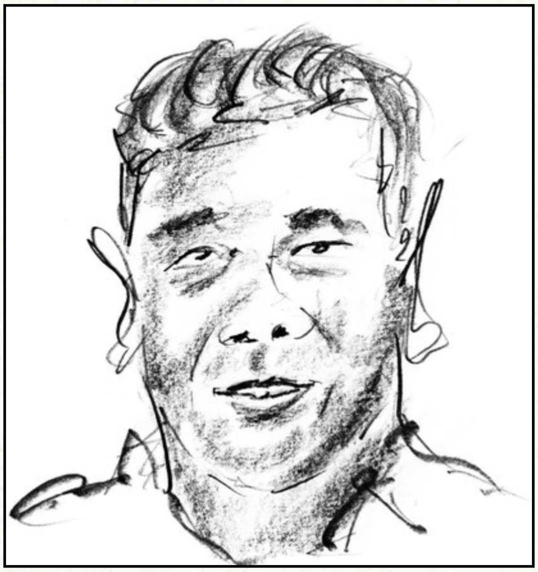
Andrew Collins
Facilitator of Learning



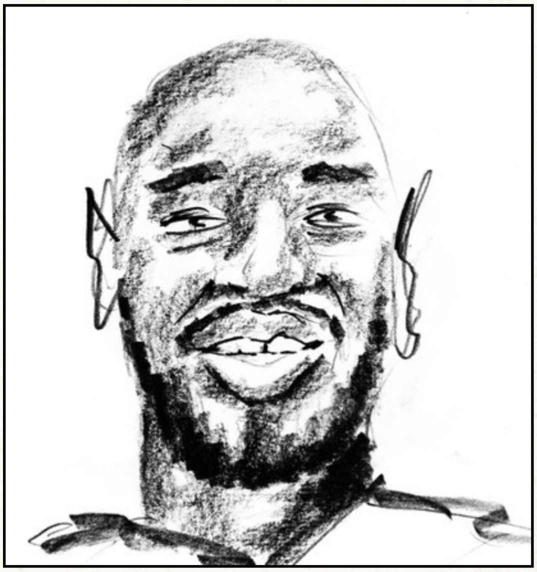
Kaharri Carter
Facilitator of Learning



Shalyn Quandt
Facilitator of Learning

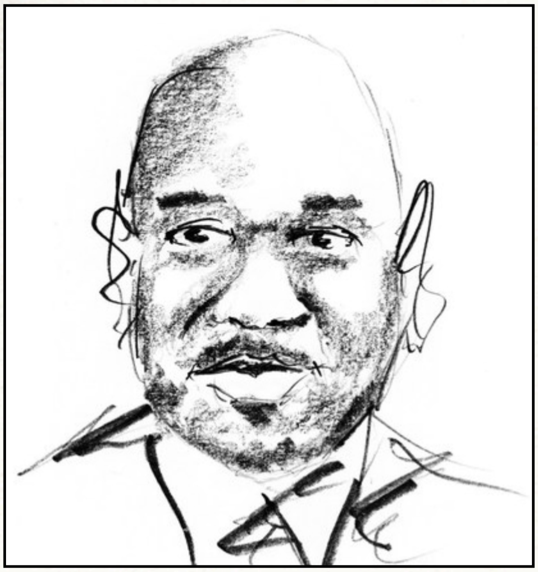


Randall Gifford
Facilitator of Learning

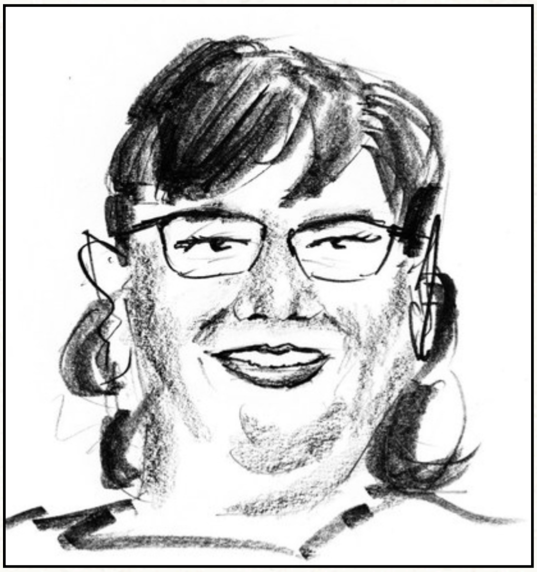


Tylor Coley
Online School Coordinator

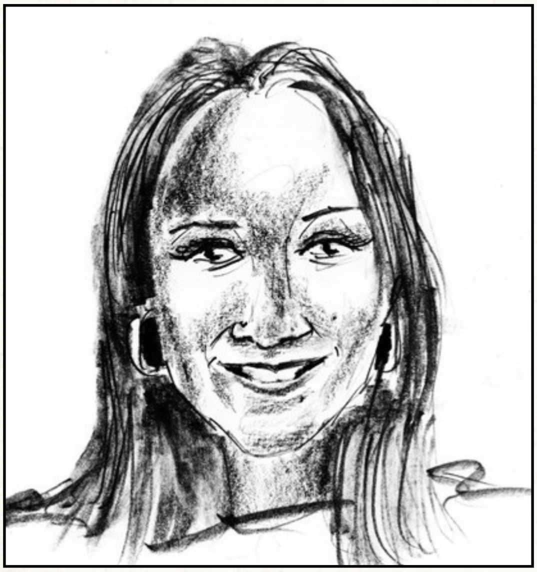
Staff



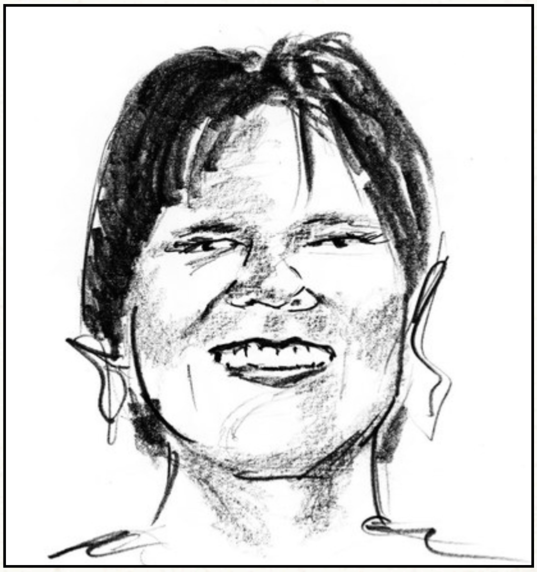
Darryl Young
Special Education
Facilitator of Learning



Barbara Murphy
Math, Student Info,
Data Management



Sarah Graham
Facilitator of Learning



Nicole Belle Isle
Special Education
Facilitator of Learning

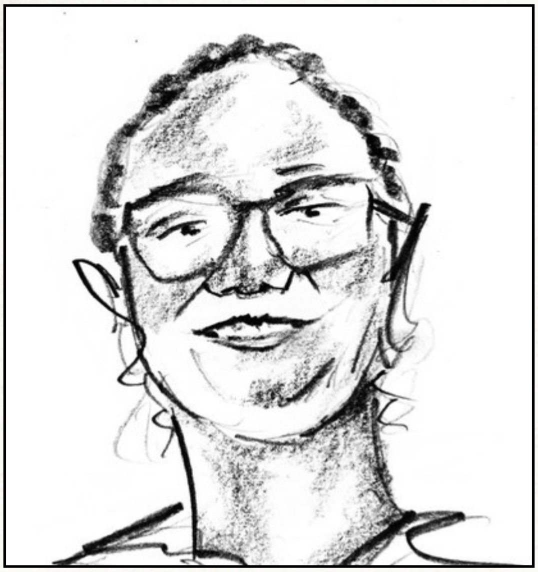
John Meyer
Special Education
Facilitator of Learning

Rikice Ellis
Facilitator of Learning

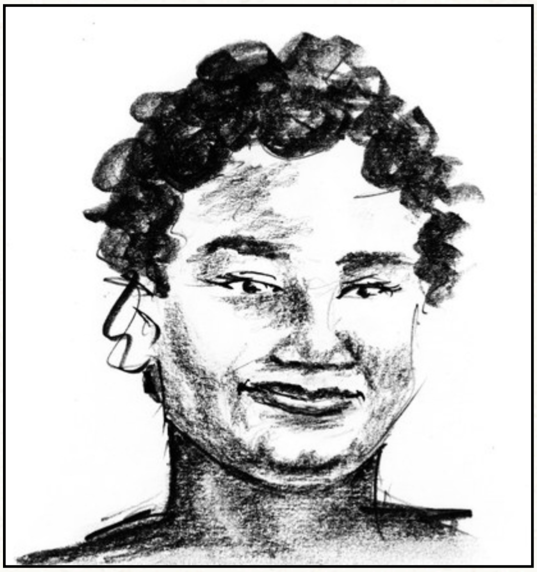
Ionia Hamer
Facilitator of Learning

Rajine Williams
Facilitator of Learning

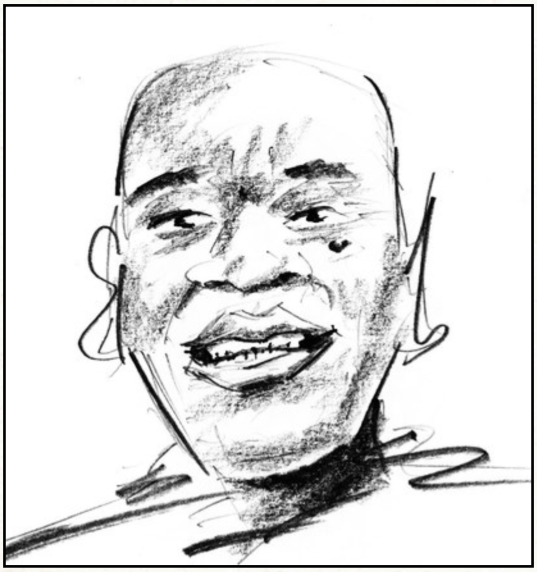
Staff



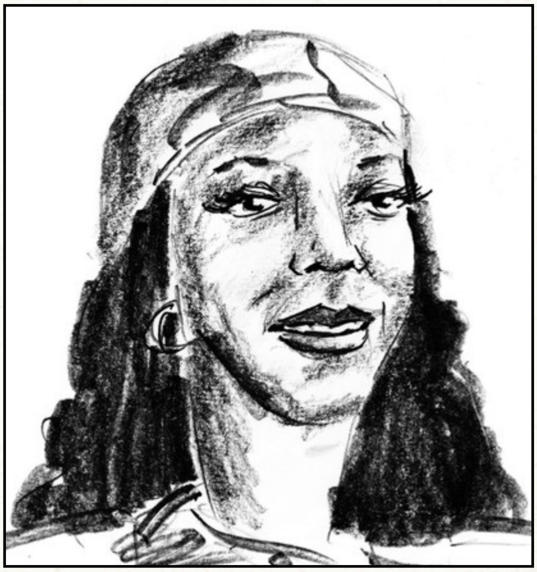
Meghan Currens
Social Worker



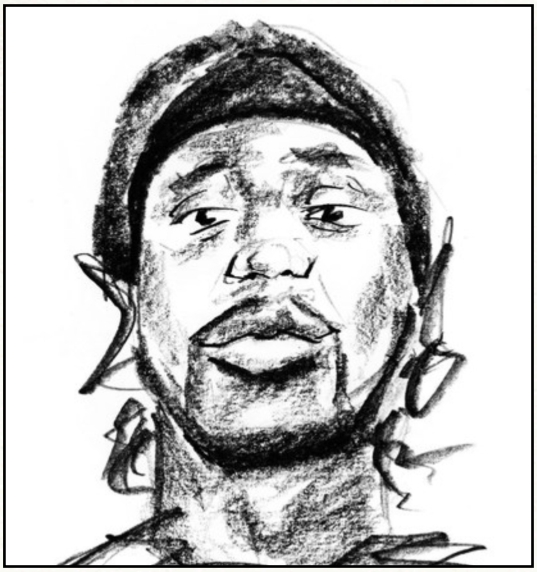
Riana Aulet
Accounting Clerk



Howard Ellis
Business Office Support

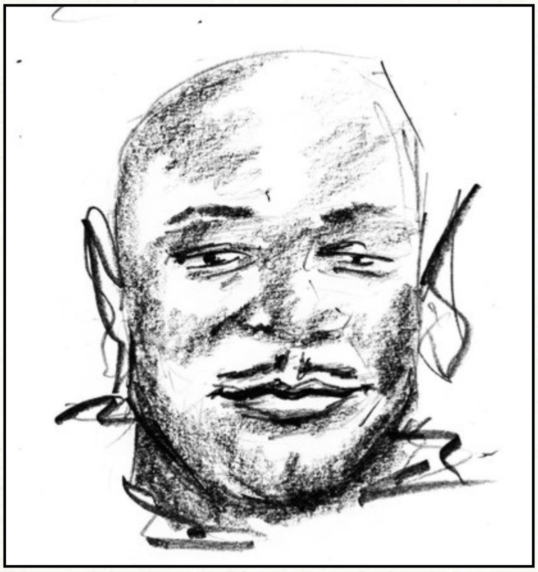


Brieana Peery
Assistant Dean of
Culture



Jamal Booker
Student Support

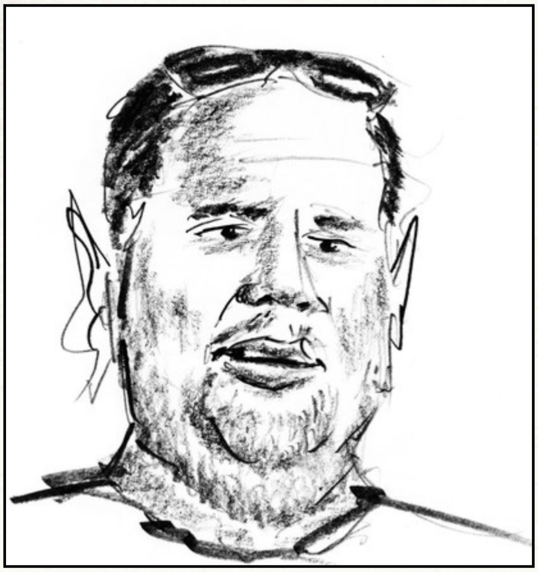
Pierre Fulford
Student Support



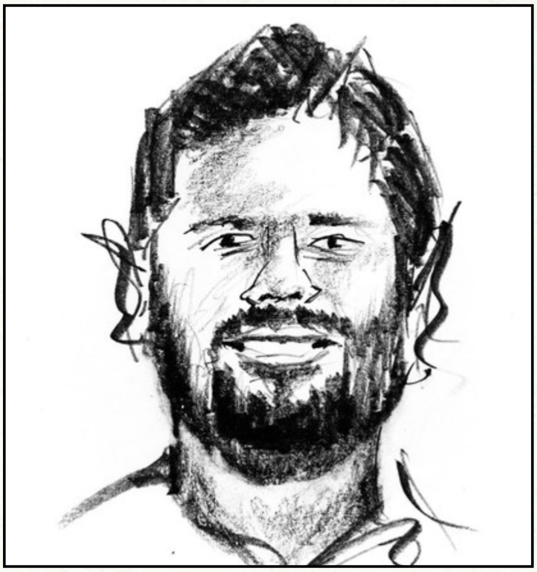
Brian Sandifer
Student Support
Behavioral Specialist

Robert Cutshall
Studio Engineer

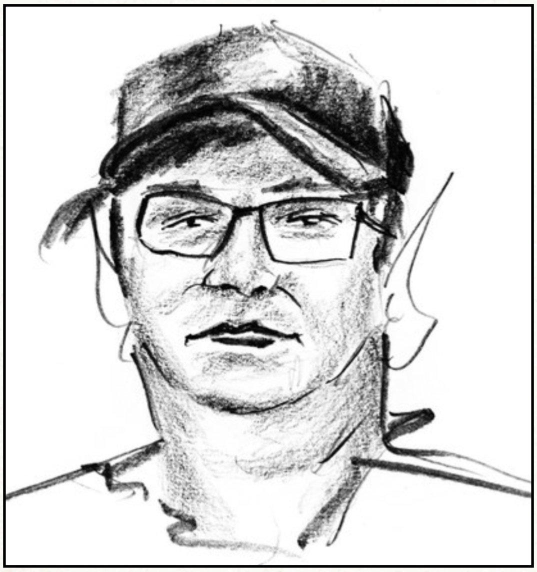
Staff



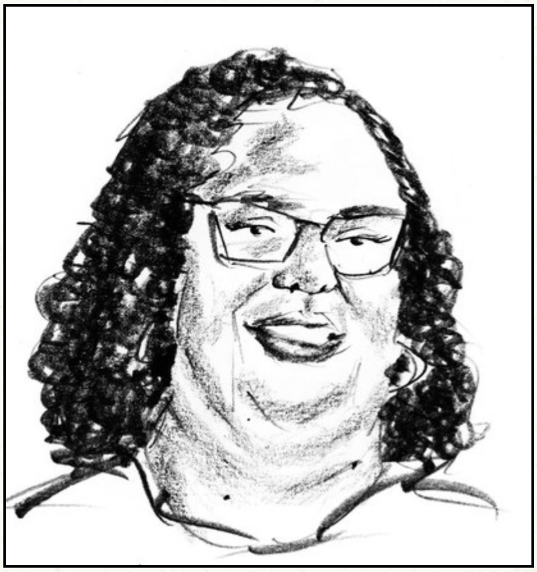
Scott Herold
Business of Music



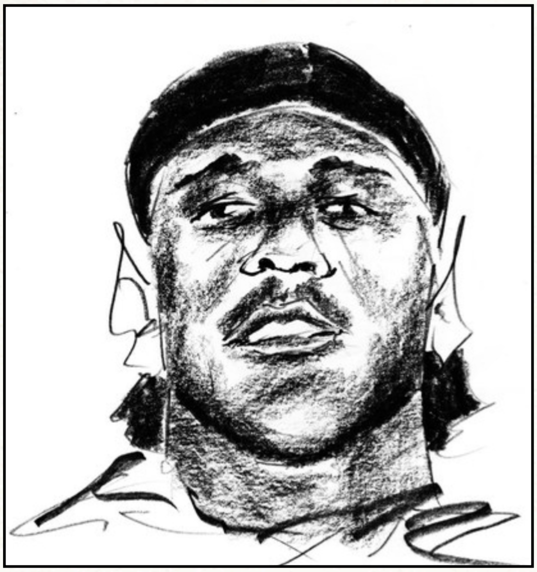
Ian Mader
Technology Support



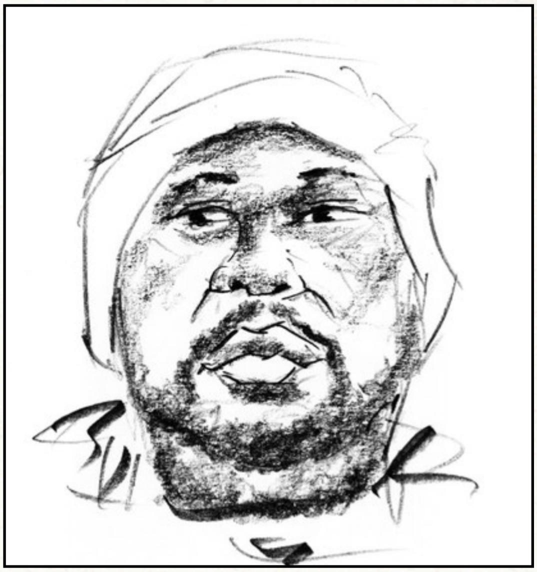
Jon Engelking
Facilitator of Learning



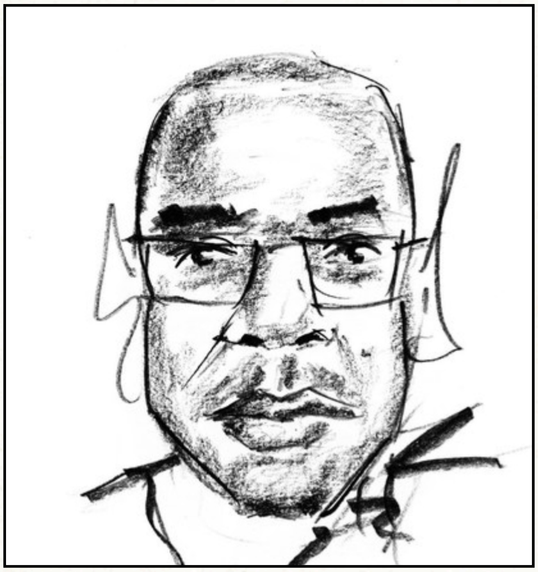
Leah McGinley
Facilitator of Learning



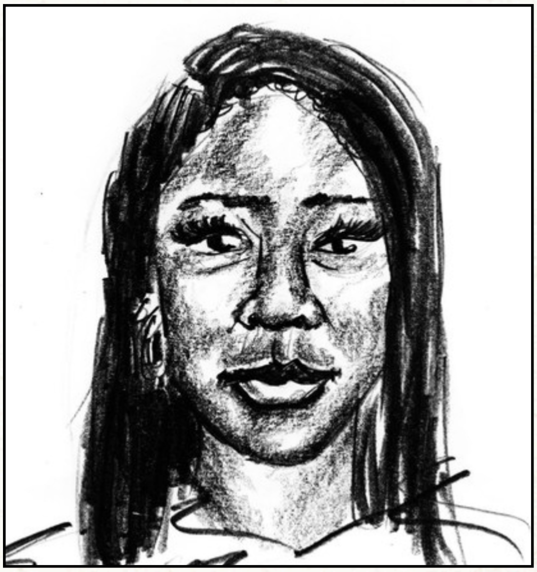
David Cox
Maintenance



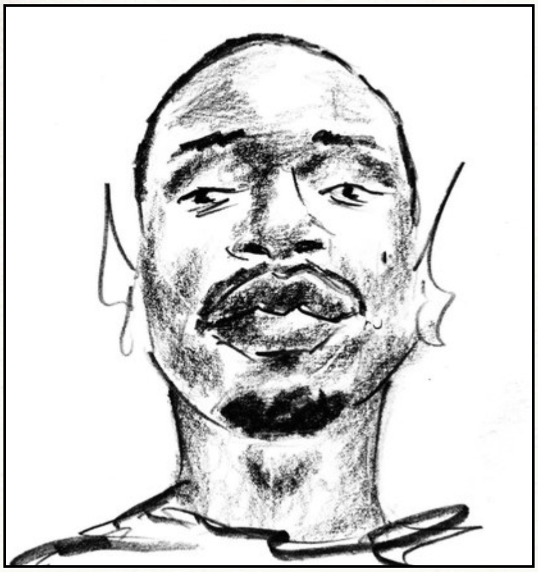
Rafael Williams
Facilities Manager



Tyrone Winn
Front Desk, Security



Tyraa Wells
Facilitator of Learning



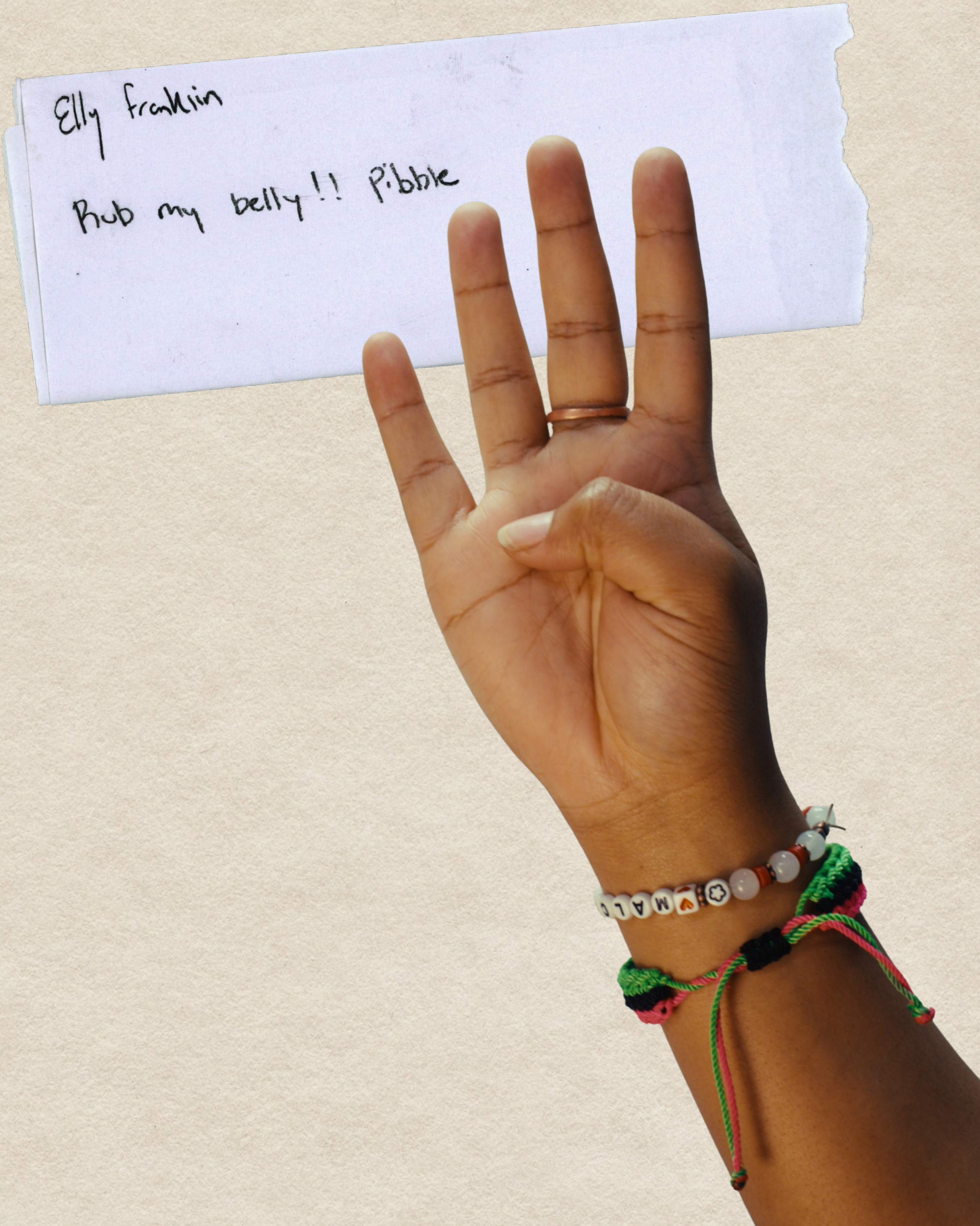
Emit Hutherson
Facilitator of Learning

Across the country, a lot of teachers are burnt out, checked out, or just in the classroom because it was the next best gig. That is real, and it's understandable. Sure, this generation of young people can be challenging. However, HSRA is not that. The staff here show up every day because they **care**. Sometimes it feels like these kids are their own, except nobody's allowed to whoop anyone; instead, they **discipline with love**, correct mistakes, pick students up when they fall, and laugh with them when they're back on their feet. They hold students to a standard that some of them might have to grow into, and they do it consistently, with real commitment.

Academics at HSRA are **non-negotiable**. English, math, science, and social studies are the foundation. The studios, recording gear, and creative projects are the icing, not the cake. Students still have to show up, do the work, and hit state-required benchmarks. No excuses, no cutting corners.

It's not always about keeping students in check. Sometimes staff has to look themselves in the mirror as well. Again, the school regularly **self-audits and makes adjustments as needed**, ensuring that both students and staff remain on the same page, aligned with the mission and values of the school. To build something that lasts almost 30 years and counting, there's no room for complacency.

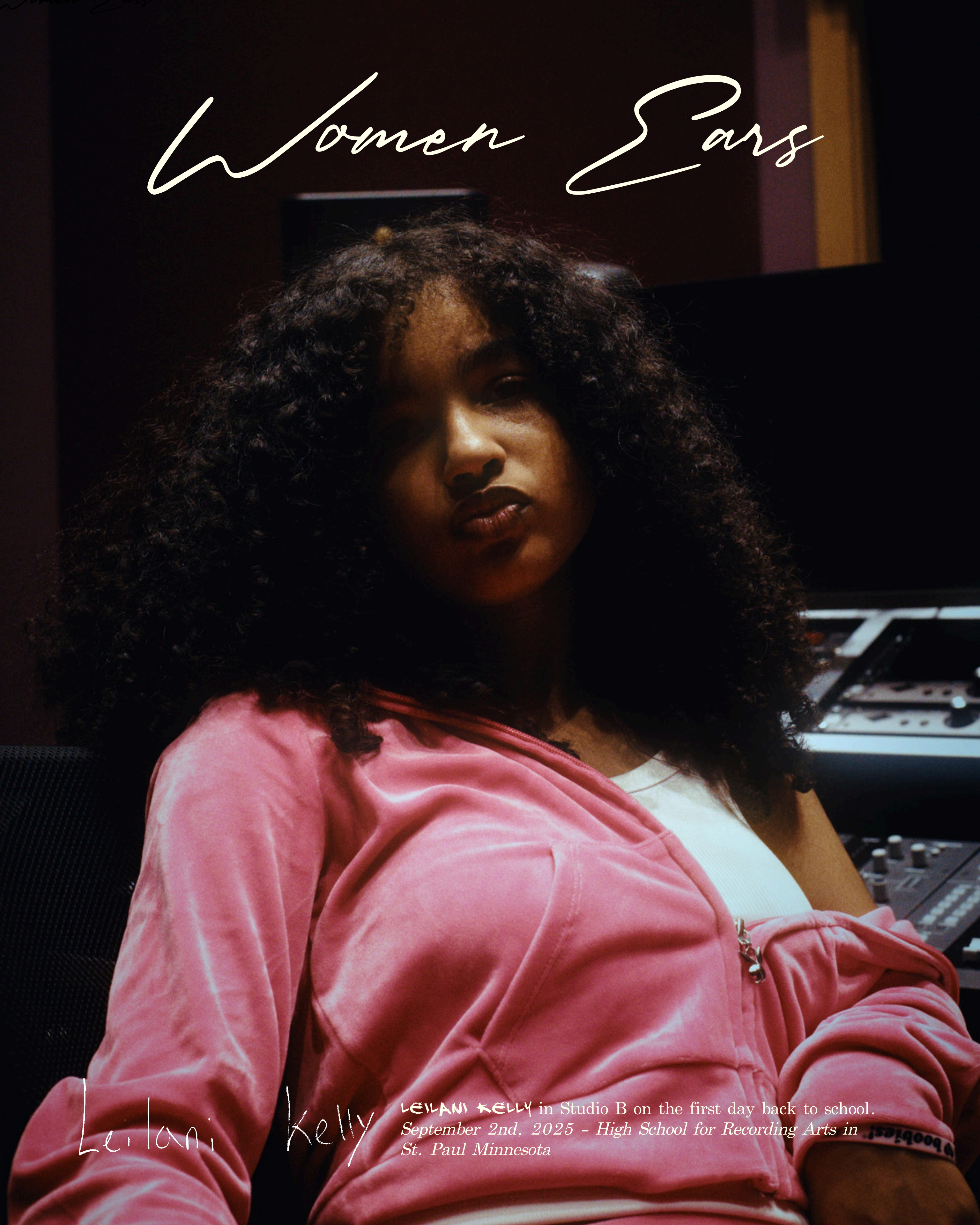
Furthermore, the mission isn't about making school feel easy or letting anyone coast. It's about showing students that challenges are meant to be faced, mistakes are meant to be learned from, and growth doesn't happen in a straight line. The atmosphere here removes some of the sting of life's challenges, giving students a space where they can recover, refocus, and find the energy to keep pushing. Students discover what they're capable of, often before they even believe it themselves. The culture pushes them to take ownership, think critically, and step into opportunities they didn't know they could reach.



Elly franklin

Rub my belly!! pibble

Women Ears



Leilani Kelly

LEILANI KELLY in Studio B on the first day back to school.
September 2nd, 2025 - High School for Recording Arts in
St. Paul Minnesota

Women have historically been underrepresented in audio engineering, making up less than 5% of professionals in the field. Despite this, many have broken barriers and left a mark on the music industry.

And as MLK might have said if he'd spent a little time in the studio: *"I have a dream that men and women, boys and girls, of all colors, will touch the sound board and engineer music together."*

Mandy Parnell is a Grammy-nominated mastering engineer whose work with artists like Aphex Twin and Björk has set the standard for electronic music. She has an ear for sound so precise, you might swear she could hear a mosquito hum in a stadium.

Mary Mazurek brings over 25 years of experience to her craft, collaborating with artists ranging from Yo-Yo Ma to the Vienna Boys Choir. Beyond her work in the studio, she advocates for diversity in audio engineering, mentoring young engineers to trust that their ideas… and their ears are just as good as the next engineer.

Gena Johnson has become a pioneering force in country music engineering, working with Chris Stapleton and Brandi Carlile. She was the first female nominated for the Academy of Country Music's Audio Engineer of the Year award and has won multiple Grammys.

Susan Rogers, famed for engineering Prince's iconic 1980s albums, has inspired countless engineers with her innovative approaches and technical expertise. If you're gonna experiment in a studio, Susan's already three steps ahead of you. Maybe we'll call her the Princess of engineers.

Marta Salogni, an Italian-born engineer, has crafted signature mixes for Bon Iver and Björk. Known for her experimental use of tape machines and sonic textures.

Sylvia Massy, a Black female engineer and producer, has worked with artists like Tool, Johnny Cash, and System of a Down. Known for her original techniques and hands-on approach, Sylvia has mentored countless [illegible] and continues to inspire [illegible] to push the [illegible]

[illegible] **rri Winsto**[illegible] 2003) and **Girls Make Beats** (founded by **DJ DiViNCi in 2012**) are helping to build a future where everyone has the chance to create music, mentor others, and shape the sound of culture. These organizations provide mentorship, training, and community, ensuring that young women and girls of all backgrounds can pursue careers in music production and audio engineering.

These several organizations are helping to boost the percentage of women and girls entering audio engineering; add High School for Recording Arts to that list.

STUDIO B *The place to B.*

DON'T GET THEM CONFUSED:

RAM System 2000 vs. Audio Interface

Let's clear something up right away. The RAM System 2000 and an audio interface are not the same thing. They are best friends in the studio but they do very different jobs. It is completely understandable if you confuse them because they both deal with sound and sit in the same part of your setup.

Think of the audio interface as the chef. It takes all your ingredients, microphones, instruments, computer sounds, and turns them into something your computer can understand and process.

It also makes the sound from your computer ready to go out to speakers or headphones. Without it, your studio would be like a kitchen without a stove. Nothing cooks, nothing comes out right. And yes, there's a difference between microwaved creativity and stove topped creativity. Please, make it with love.

Now the RAM System 2000 is like the tasting spoon. Once the interface has cooked the music, the RAM System lets you taste it.

"Walking through the halls at HSRA, you notice the little things; the hum of the lights, the smell of cables and wood, the way the rooms feel lived in. Some rooms feel serious, some feel intimidating if you have no clue what to do with all the equipment, but Studio B felt different. It's like walking to the fridge in the middle of the night when you're super thirsty and finally taking that first long drink of water.

You can make it louder or quieter, try it on different speakers, check the bass, or even talk to the band without yelling. It does not make the music, it just makes sure you hear it exactly how it is supposed to sound. Think of it like the critic who does not ruin the meal but tells you if it is too salty or if the chef is secretly overusing autotune.

The Heritage Audio RAM System 2000 comes in at $999. Yeah, that could probably buy you a used car, but what good is a car if you can’t play good mixes in it?

I enjoy all the spaces in the studio, from Studio A, the main room, to the pre-production rooms, but the first time I stepped into Studio B, the room just felt natural. Working there gave me a sense of control I hadn’t experienced in the other rooms or even in other studios I’ve been in. I could hear every detail in my mixes, adjust levels without second-guessing, and experiment without worrying about missing something important. The room just made sense, and it quickly became my favorite place to work."

Solid State Logic

A PIECE OF EQUIPMENT
4 a peyce of mind.

ALL Hands
ON DECK

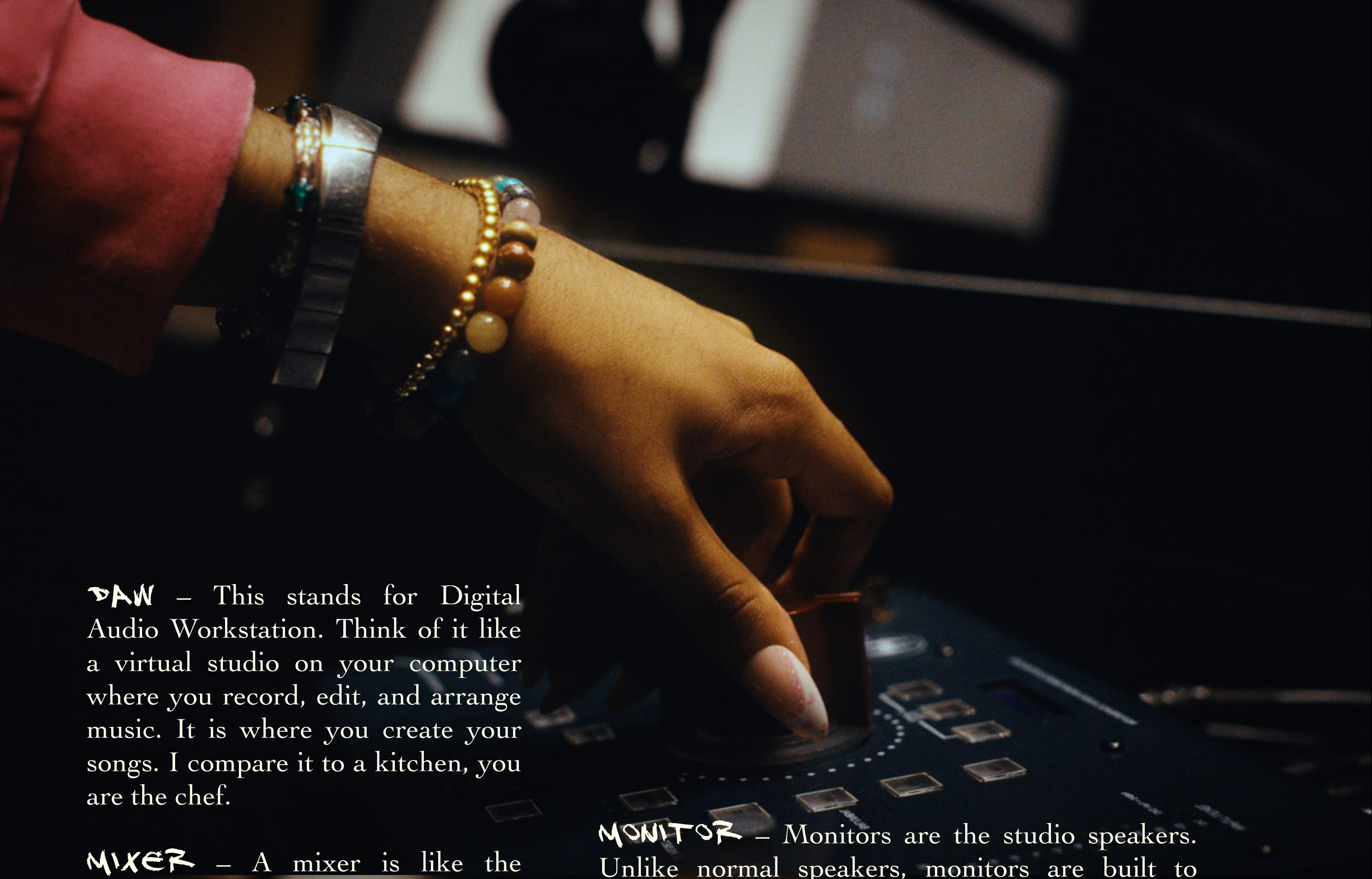
Heritage Audio RAM System 2000
The Heritage Audio RAM System 2000 is a high-end monitor controller. It sits between your music source and your speakers or headphones. It controls the volume, manages multiple inputs, and makes sure the sound you hear is accurate and clear. It has precise volume control, headphone amplifiers, a subwoofer output, and a talkback microphone for communicating with artists in the studio. It is designed for professionals who need ultra-accurate sound without noise or distortion.

RAM System 2000 for Dummies
Think of the RAM System 2000 like a parent watching over a newborn. It keeps everything safe and makes sure nothing gets too loud or chaotic. It notices every little detail, from the quiet hiccups to the soft coos, and even the cries that need immediate attention. It makes sure your mix grows up healthy and balanced without any surprises like a late-night doo doo diaper situation. Basically, it is like having a very patient parent for your music who doesn't complain when the mix gets a little fussy.

photographed by ***Jordan Lyles***

SOFT KEYS
SELECTION MODE
CHANNEL
logitech
INPUT LEVEL
REFERENCE AUDIO MONITORING SYSTEM 2000
Heritage Audio
R.A.M.
SYSTEM 2000

If all this sounds like gibberish, this is what everything means—

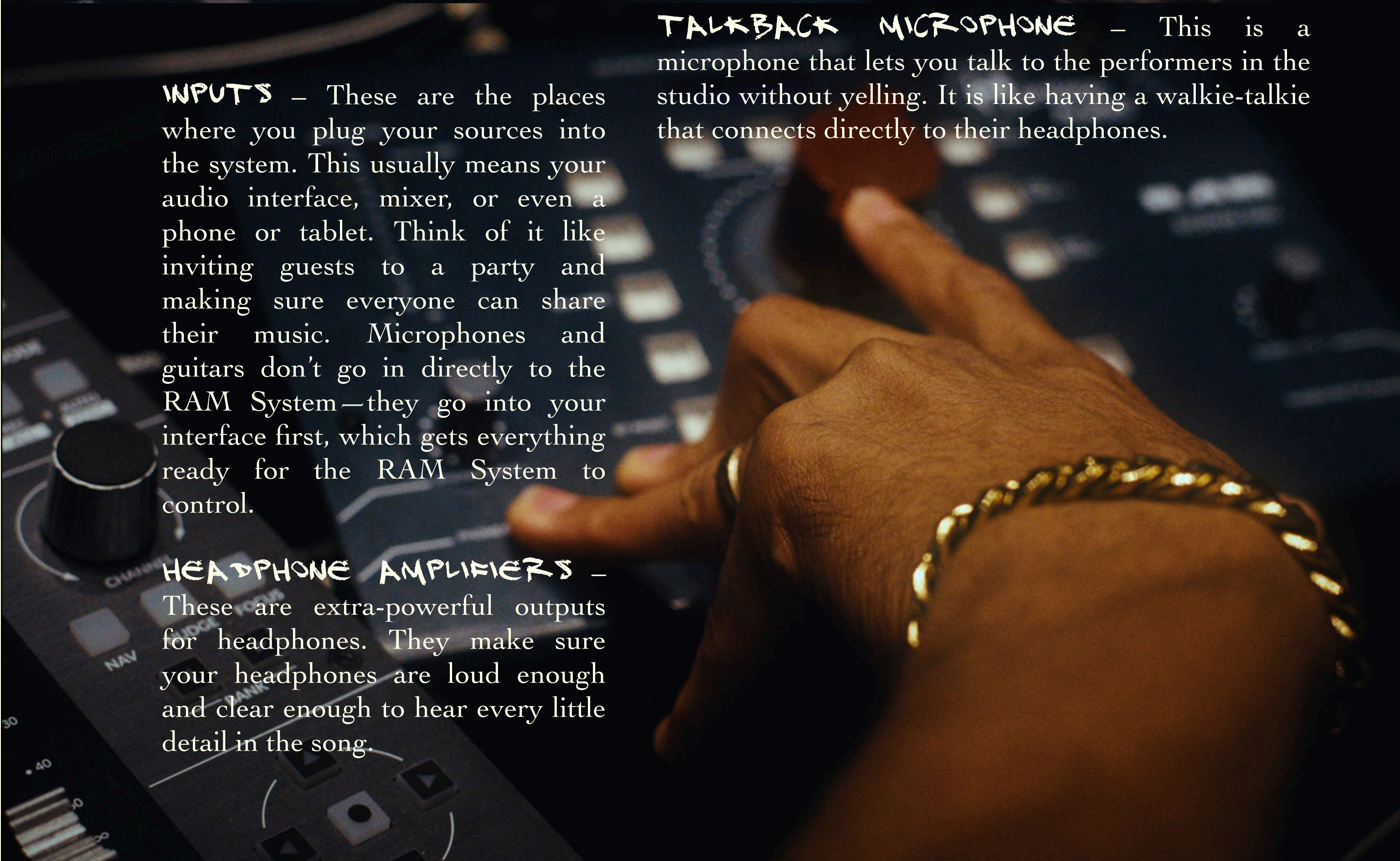


DAW – This stands for Digital Audio Workstation. Think of it like a virtual studio on your computer where you record, edit, and arrange music. It is where you create your songs. I compare it to a kitchen, you are the chef.

MIXER – A mixer is like the control panel. You can adjust the levels of different sounds, like vocals, drums, and guitars, so everything works together. You can make the drums louder or the vocals softer without breaking the song.

MONITOR – Monitors are the studio speakers. Unlike normal speakers, monitors are built to show you exactly what your music sounds like. They do not add extra bass or make things sound cooler. They are honest speakers.

VOLUME CONTROL – This is how loud or quiet the sound is. The RAM System 2000 does this in very tiny steps so you can get the perfect level without blasting your ears.



INPUTS – These are the places where you plug your sources into the system. This usually means your audio interface, mixer, or even a phone or tablet. Think of it like inviting guests to a party and making sure everyone can share their music. Microphones and guitars don't go in directly to the RAM System—they go into your interface first, which gets everything ready for the RAM System to control.

HEADPHONE AMPLIFIERS – These are extra-powerful outputs for headphones. They make sure your headphones are loud enough and clear enough to hear every little detail in the song.

SUBWOOFER OUTPUT – A subwoofer is a speaker that handles very low sounds, like bass or kick drums. The RAM System 2000 can control the subwoofer separately so the bass does not overpower the rest of the music.

TALKBACK MICROPHONE – This is a microphone that lets you talk to the performers in the studio without yelling. It is like having a walkie-talkie that connects directly to their headphones.

Learning your way around a studio can be intimidating at first. There are so many buttons, knobs, faders, and inputs that it feels like your brain is about to short-circuit. But think of it like learning how to drive. At first, you notice every pedal, every turn of the wheel, every gear shift, and it feels like you have to consciously think about every single movement. Over time, it becomes automatic. You don't even have to think about pressing the brake when you see a stop sign or checking the mirrors before changing lanes; your body just reacts.

The same goes for the studio. After spending time with the gear, learning the layout, and understanding what each piece does, it stops feeling overwhelming. Adjusting levels, switching inputs, toggling monitors, it all starts happening without overthinking. You can focus on the music itself instead of worrying about the gear.

ARTIST FEATURE

INTERVIEW Khari Johnson

Interviewed on September 2nd, 2025

Khari Johnson
Born December 16th, 2005

19 years, 8 months, 17 days old
228 months and 17 days
1,026 weeks and 3 days
7,185 days
172,440 hours
10,346,400 minutes
620,784,000 seconds

Jordan: So you told me you started making music because all your stuff got taken?

Khari: Yeah.

Jordan: So just dive in about that. Where were you at during that time? I also wanted to talk about the lesson, because you said that you made a decision where you were like 'Forget school'. But now you're kind of in a place where you're coming back, and you got that lesson under your belt. So now you can provide that guidance for somebody else. How would you put it in a way where you took it as a lesson, opposed to something you regret? You got me?

Khari: Yeah. So I just started rapping probably, what, five years ago. My OG took my phone—I ain't had nothing to do. She took all devices that involved music, 'cause you know that's the only thing I cared about, for real. She took every single device that had music, and I had this notebook, so I started writing a song. Eventually, she got tired of me being in her face, so she gave me my phone back. So, boom. I turned on a beat and I rapped. Thought it was the rawest in the world, but my mom didn't like it though. I ain't gonna lie—I was talking about a lot of stuff.

I think I was like 12, 13. I just kept writing and stuff. I was already a dancer, but I just kept writing. Then I quit dancing, started taking music seriously. I got into stuff down here in Minnesota, and I moved to Houston in like 2020, 2021. I stayed there for about a year, got connected with different influencers, big celebrities. And I said, *"F— school, completely."*

I stopped doing all types of schoolwork. I was on track to graduate—I was doing what I felt I was supposed to do. But when I got to fame or whatever, I just said "Eff it". But I hadn't even *made* it yet—I was almost there. But I was in the hype of it and I just said, *"Eff it,"*and ended up falling behind in school. My sister made me come back here to Minnesota with my mom because I wasn't doing my work.

And when I had came back, I had fame basically—not out there in Houston, but down here in Minnesota—'cause everybody had seen me doing stuff. I got real cocky and big-headed about it. I didn't do much still, when it came to school. I was working, but I wasn't focused on school. I would pop up once every two weeks to make sure I didn't get dropped, but it was really a waste of time.

Then I got back serious with my music and started TikTok-in' with my friends, blew up off that, gained a buzz. But when it comes down to money, I need a job. You really need a diploma to get a good job at 19. So now, I really just gotta come back to school and get my work done. I got most of my work done. I think I need like 10 more credits. Unless I do that, I'll be stuck for sure.

Jordan: So what do you foresee after you graduate?

Khari: I was thinking about going to college, but due to my life, my credits, and my school history, I probably won't get into any major college. So, probably just community college or something, find something to have as a backing, like when I do want a job, just something that shows proof I can do it. If not, then I'll just keep hosting and promoting, throwing shows up. That's what I like to do most.

Jordan: You got it man, it's all apart of your journey. All right, let's get into that real quick. Tell me about hosting. How did you get into that, and why do you love it so much?

Khari: When I was little, when I first started rapping, it was like at birthday parties. They'd ask me to come and rap and stuff. I always liked being on the mic and I've always been comfortable in front of crowds and speaking in front of people.

When it came to hosting, I was dancing on TikTok with my friends. A dude named Dolo—he's real big on the North Side—used to host shows when he was younger. Now we're kind of big right now, so he wanted us to host a show for him.

He brought us out there. When I tell you, he had us in the back. He came back there and said, *"We out in here in the front and the kids is happy, like overly happy"*. I didn't know I could make people that happy—not just me, but me and the guy, we made people happy for real.

We did that show, I rapped, they liked my music too. So, I dance, I rap, but I also just like making people happy and seeing if I can keep people turned up.

I'm still kind of nervous asking people, *"Hey, how y'all doing?"* Right now, I grab the mic, sing a song, interact with people, hand the mic to people in the crowd, take videos, stuff like that. I like doing it, but I'm still getting comfortable with it.

Jordan: Yeah, that's cool. I can relate. But you look confident, all that's internal, because outwardly you look like you're in control and you carry yourself calmly. Yeah. So making people happy, I imagine that ties into what you said earlier, you make music for the people.

Khari: Yeah, pretty much.

Jordan: Yeah. But you also mentioned you have another side. Yeah, you make the turn up songs but you also make songs about mental health.

Khari: Yeah.

Jordan: To a person that says, *"Why would you make this type of music if you didn't live that?"* What would you say?

Khari: I make music for people, not for me. Some songs I don't genuinely like, but people like them. Mental health songs? People relate, that's cool. When I think about dropping a song, I think: Do I drop a song about me first, manifesting something good? Or do I drop a song about guns? People will view me differently if I do both. So, I have to figure out what I want to drop first.

Jordan: Makes sense. I want to challenge you here, do you ever feel that certain content could have a negative impact on people? Does that ever weigh on your conscience?

Khari: Yeah, I think about it all the time. I talk about guns, drugs, but I don't smoke, I don't drink, I don't own a gun. Will I at 21? Maybe. Guns, drugs, violence, it's all around me. I grew up around it, but it's not me. I distance myself. Nine out of ten times, if I say it's me, I'm just rapping. People relate to it, though. I don't make music about me, I make it for the people who want to listen.

Jordan: Yeah. Most people view it the same way they view movies. It's just entertainment. It's art. And you have freedom to express it, but it's also good to have that clarity of intention.

Khari: Yeah. Mm hmm.

Jordan: Almost done. Just a few facts. Where & when were you born?

Khari: Minneapolis. 2005.

Jordan: First and last name, and artist name?

Khari: Khari Johnson. My artist name is Big HB—it's short for Harlem's Brother.

Jordan: Got it. Birthday?

Khari: December 16th, 2005.

Jordan: So, you're 19.

Khari: Yep.

Jordan: Last question. Something people don't stress enough, but should?

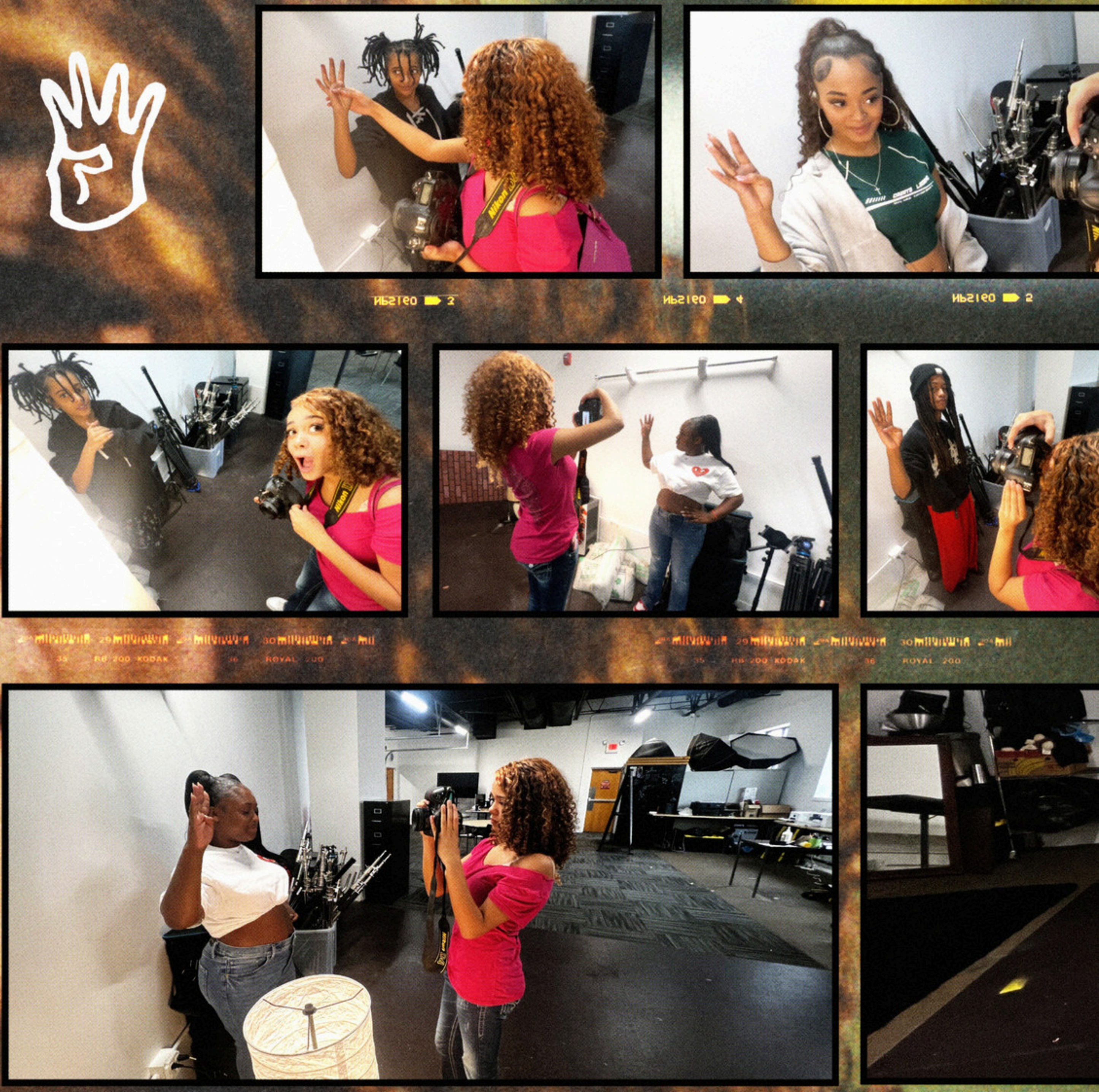
Khari: Check on your people. Make sure everyone's straight, clear. Everybody goes through things, whether you know it or not.

Jordan: That's what's up, man.

Khari: Thank you, brother.

What comes to mind is being present. Sitting with self. prioritizing personal wellness. for example the first hour (if possible) after waking up do not go for your phone at all. Be there in your body, strech, get some sun whatever have you. But I think skipping that time to prioritize self does affect ones way of being. I say try it & see which feels better. (it's not that phone fs)

- I'yani Dozier aka Groovy AKA Peacefoot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— **Khloe Kruchowski** or *Kick Buttowski* as I call her, picked up photography fast. On the first day of school, she showed interest, asking questions about the camera around my neck, and didn't hesitate to learn. I took her under wing for this magazine issue and she got familiar with the Nikon D4, getting a feel for the pace of adjusting for different lighting. Next issue and issues to come, she'll be doing more of the real running and gunning; stepping out, catching her own pace, and spreading her own wings.

1 2 ROYAL 200 3 KODAK FILM 4 ROYAL 200 5 RB 200 KODAK 6 ROYAL 200

Khloe Kruchowski

Nikon | NIKON CORPORATION
Tokyo, Japan

D4
VBA32001

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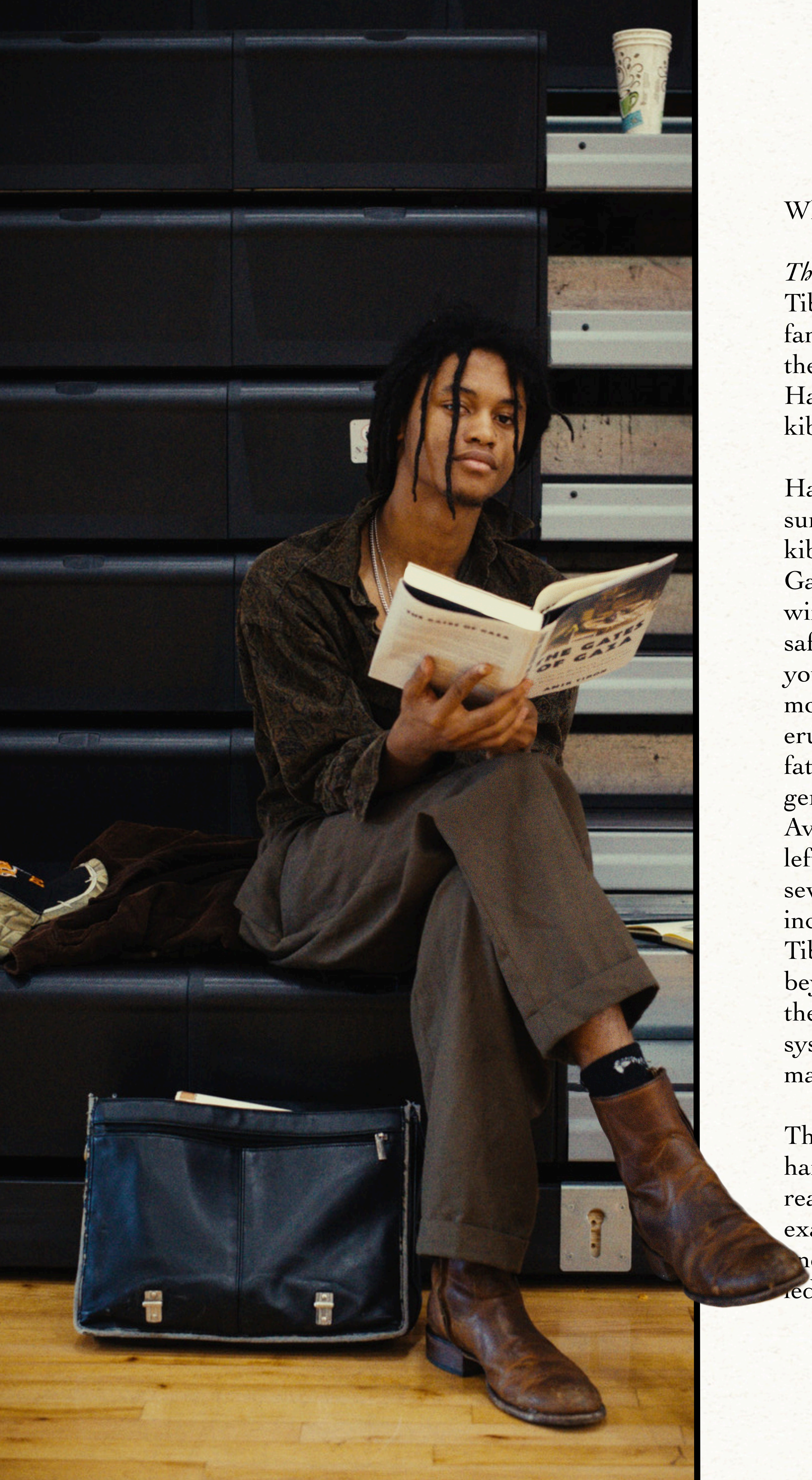
無断転載を禁ず !!

Almost everything we do traces back to war, struggle, or survival. Even the tools we use to check the facts... yeah, that thing in your pocket, have roots in conflict. The internet started as ARPANET, a military project built to survive nuclear attacks. Soul food was born from enslaved people turning scraps into meals. Culture is no different. Hip hop rose out of the Bronx as a response to poverty and neglect.

Cities, governments, music, food, tech; it's all stitched together from chaos and necessity. Creation and destruction aren't enemies. They're partners in crime. Look around. Start asking 'Where did all of this come from and why?'



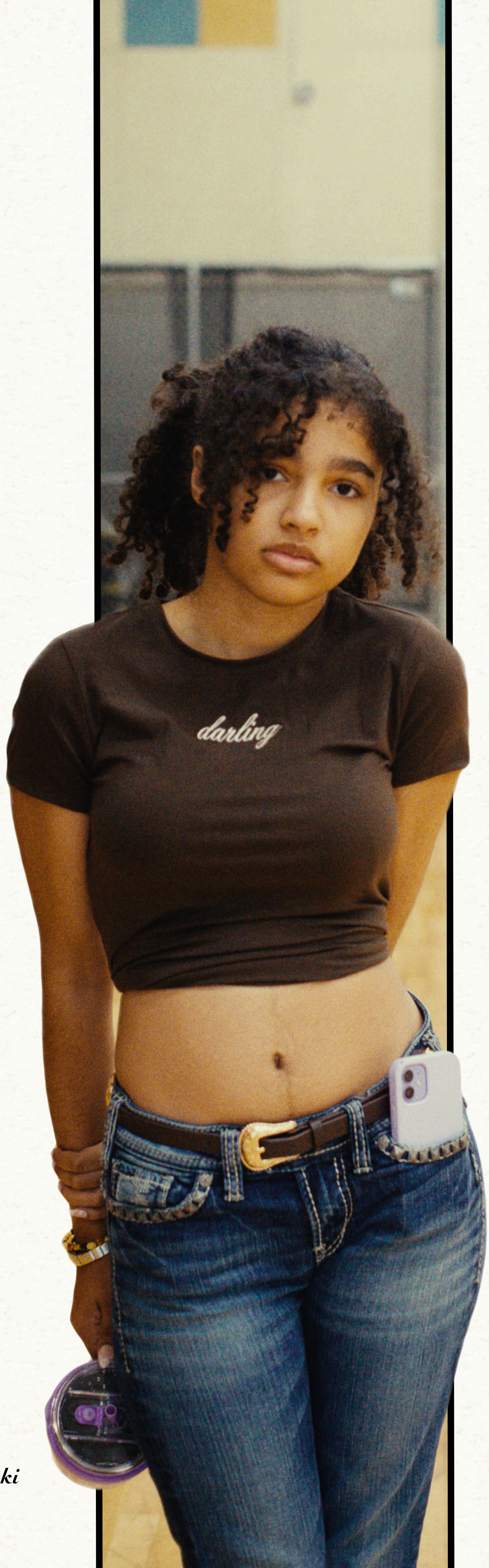
What is Jahai reading—

The Gates of Gaza by Amir Tibon tells the story of his family's survival during the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on their kibbutz near Gaza.

Hamas launched a surprise attack on the kibbutz of Nahal Oz near Gaza. Amir Tibon and his wife hid in a reinforced safe room with their two young daughters as mortar fire and gunfire erupted around them. His father, a retired Israeli general, raced from Tel Aviv to help. The attack left 15 people dead and seven kidnapped, including two young girls. Tibon's memoir goes beyond survival, exploring the political tensions and systemic failures that made that day possible.

This book recounts their harrowing experience in real time, while also examining the political nd historical factors that ed to the attack.

THE GATES OF GAZA
AMIR TIBON



— Leilani throwing up the peace sign.

The two-finger "V" peace sign started as a symbol for victory during World War II and was popularized by Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister who led the United Kingdom through the war. In the 1960s, anti-war protesters repurposed it to represent peace, especially during the Vietnam War, turning a symbol of conflict into one of hope.

Over time, the gesture became recognized worldwide and eventually found its way into hip hop and street culture, appearing in photos, music videos, and performances as a sign of unity, self-expression, and social awareness, linking its activist roots to a new cultural movement.

One year prior, during his 1968 run for the presidency, Nixon used the double V-sign in its original context, meaning "victory": a gesture he picked up from Eisenhower while serving as his vice president from 1953 to 1961."He did so quite deliberately, I believe, to reclaim it and its true meaning from the 'bums'—as he liked to call young antiwarriors and countercultural activists, particularly those on college campuses—who had, in his own eyes, 'stolen,' appropriated and made a mockery of it," Asselin says. Despite its evolution to being a message of peace, Nixon continued to use his signature double V-sign (meaning "victory") throughout his presidency, and even as he exited the White House after resigning from office in 1974.

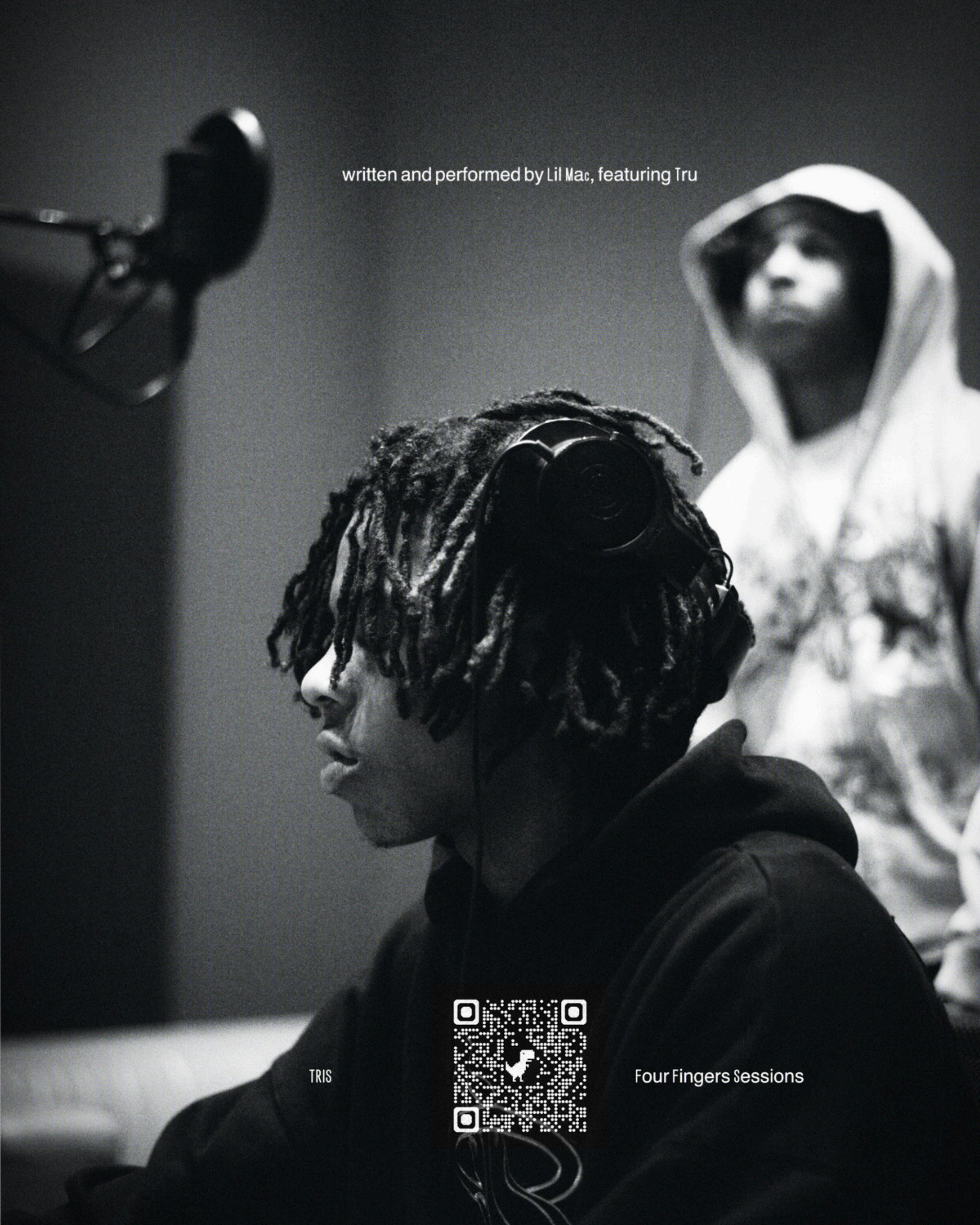
photographed by ***Khloe Kruchowski***

darli

Four Fingers Sessions

Black Suburban

written and performed by Tru, featuring 6ix Bandz



written and performed by Lil Mac, featuring Tru

TRIS

Four Fingers Sessions

— Pete Otero, *13 Years at the High School for Recording Arts*

PETE OTERO

SECOND RETIREMENT

I met Pete in passing at first—just conversations here and there whenever I fly out to Minnesota to visit the High School for Recording Arts. But even in those short spurts, it didn't take long to realize he was one of those people you learn from without trying. And when I say learn, I don't mean because he's trying to teach, but because if you really pay attention you can gain some appreciation for the little things. Pete is one of those people who doesn't talk at you, but talks with you. The kind of presence that fills a room without needing to take it over.

Somewhere in our talks, I found out Pete had already retired once… only to come back and help out again. That alone told me everything I needed to know about him. It reminded me of Michael Jordan—like he tried walking away from the game, but the game kept calling him back. Couldn't stay away, huh Pete?

It also reminds me of someone else I know out here in Cali. George The Icecream man. George doesn't have to work, he's well off. But he loves what he does, cleans his truck every morning, doesn't miss a spot and doesn't miss a day of showing up for all the kids that are looking forward to buy their regular purchase after school. I imagine Pete has those same values.

On my most recent trip, as I was leaving the school to fly back to California, I found out he was retiring for the second time. He caught me before walking out the door and let me know he'd be leaving for good this time. We had just wrapped up a conversation about 20 minutes earlier and the final conversation we shared was—of all things—about Michael Jordan. Part of that last conversation included Pete talking about his grandson, who plays ball. He showed me the highlight reels from the last game he attended—"HE HAD FIVE "AND-ONE" BUCKETS! And guess what... he only missed one of the free throws." Pete said.

This was actually the second time he mentioned this to me that day, but I can assure it's due to the pride he takes in it. You could see the joy in Pete's eyes as he shared every play, every moment. In my head, all I can think of is how beautiful life must be to be selfless enough to be that excited about someone else's highlights in life. Imagine we all made one another's highlights our highlights.

From the small window of time I've had around Pete, I could assume a few things with confidence. First thing: he loves where he's from. Pete will let you know in a heartbeat that he's from New York— and more specifically, "Down the street from the birthplace of Hip-Hop".

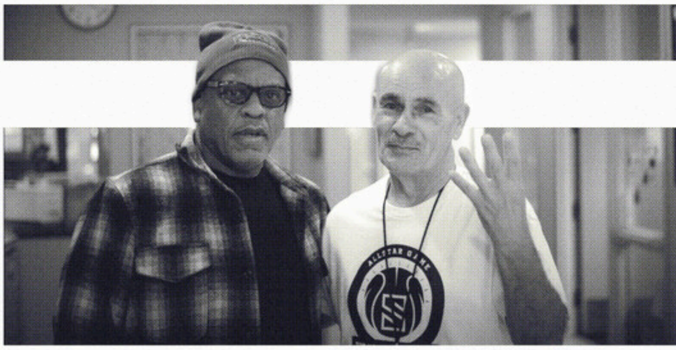
Another thing I noticed: If you mention anything that taps into a memory from back home or some chapter of the past? He's got a story ready with no hesitation. Pete has a sensitive trigger for memories. Say the right phrase, hit the right nerve, and he'll pull a moment from his life like a book off a shelf.

And he'll tell it well.

What stood out the most, though, was how often he talked about his son. Every conversation, no matter the topic, would circle back to how proud he was of Dario Otero. He spoke about his son with the kind of pride that put everything else in context. He told me about how hard Dario works, how much he invests in young people, how he built things from scratch with his own hands and vision. One story he shared was about Dario filming in an environment surrounded by some heavy dudes—some real gangsters in the room. Pete said his son told him, "I had to film, get the job done, and get up out of there." Or something like that. If you ever hear Pete tell it himself, he delivers it with that mix of concern, humor, and fatherly admiration that only a dad can. He was like a walking billboard for his son's business. With pride in his voice, he'd give me the rundown and upon conclusion he'd add: "If you go online you can find it—just type in Youth Lens 360.

From those interactions, it's clear Pete isn't just a staff member who came out of retirement. I can tell he's a man who shows up for young people because he believes in what can happen when the right environment meets the right moment. And most importantly, he's a father and grandfather who beams with pride at the legacy his family is building.

So if this really is Pete's second retirement, Let's hang the jersey in the rafters and hope he enjoys it.



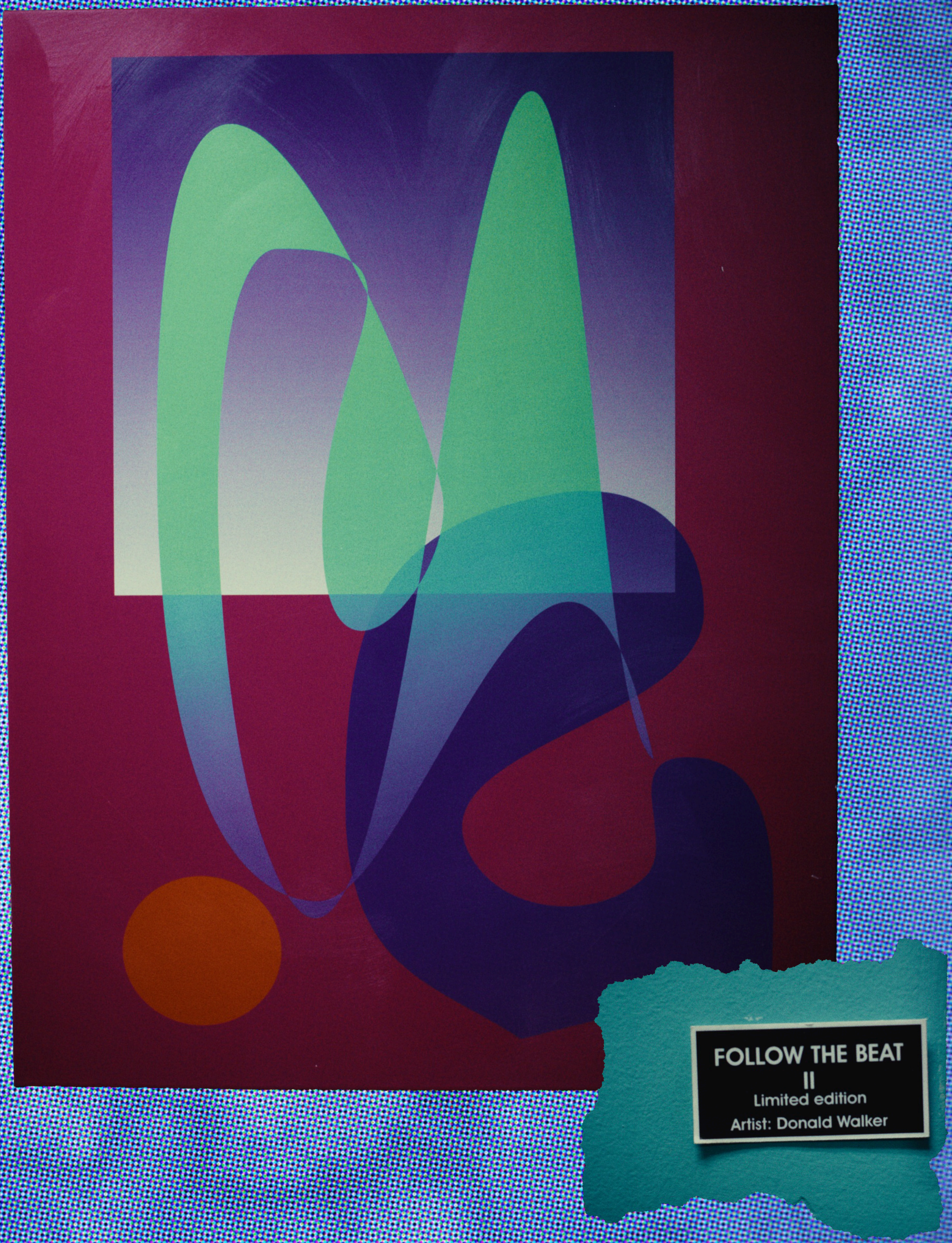
— *TC & Pete*, a photo taken right as we were about to leave to the airport. Pete mentioned he'd be retiring.

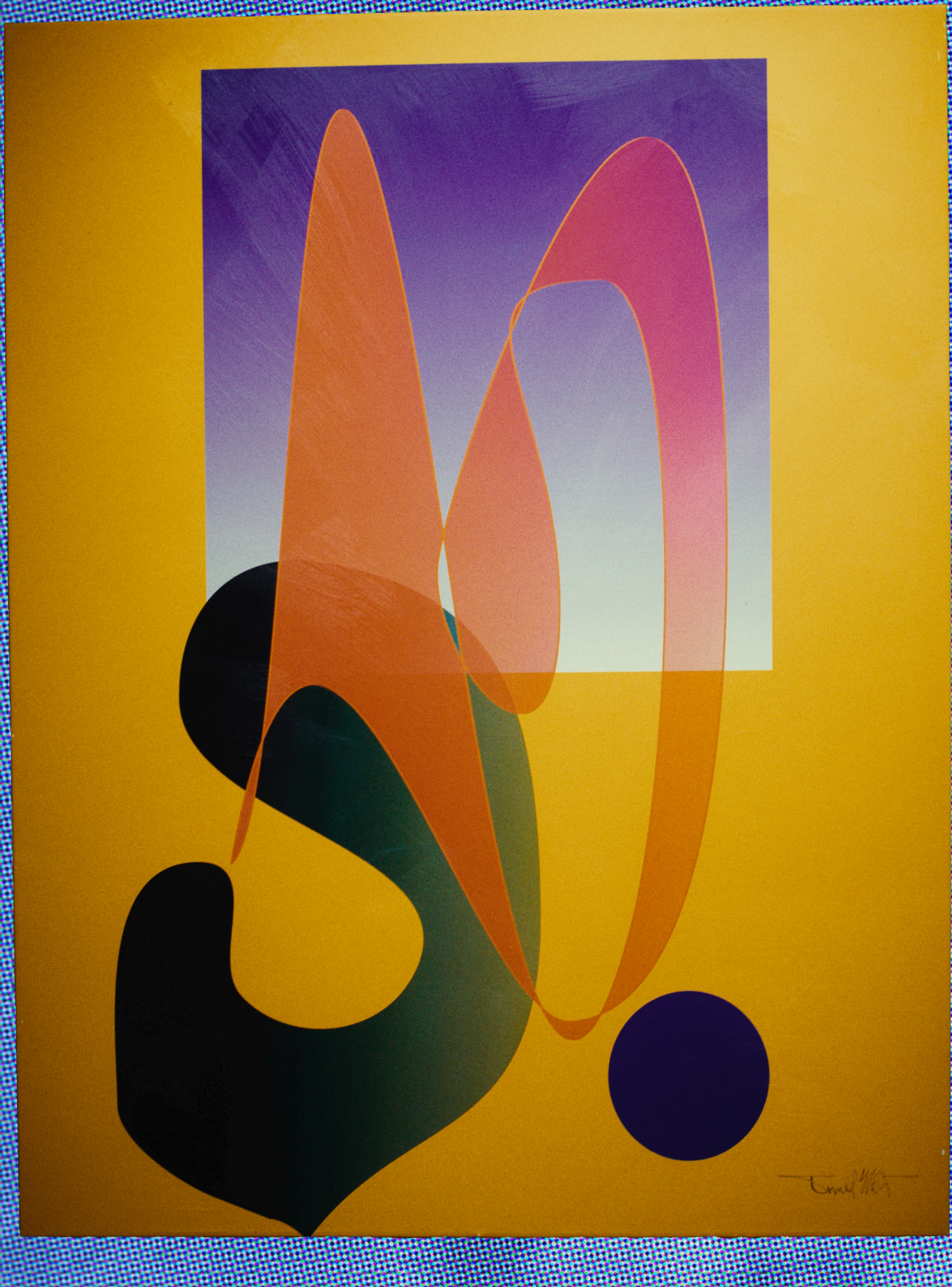
October 22nd, 2025

photographed by *Khloe Kruchowski*

— IT'S BUT A FLY WITH A DRESS... THAT LANDED ON BUTTER.

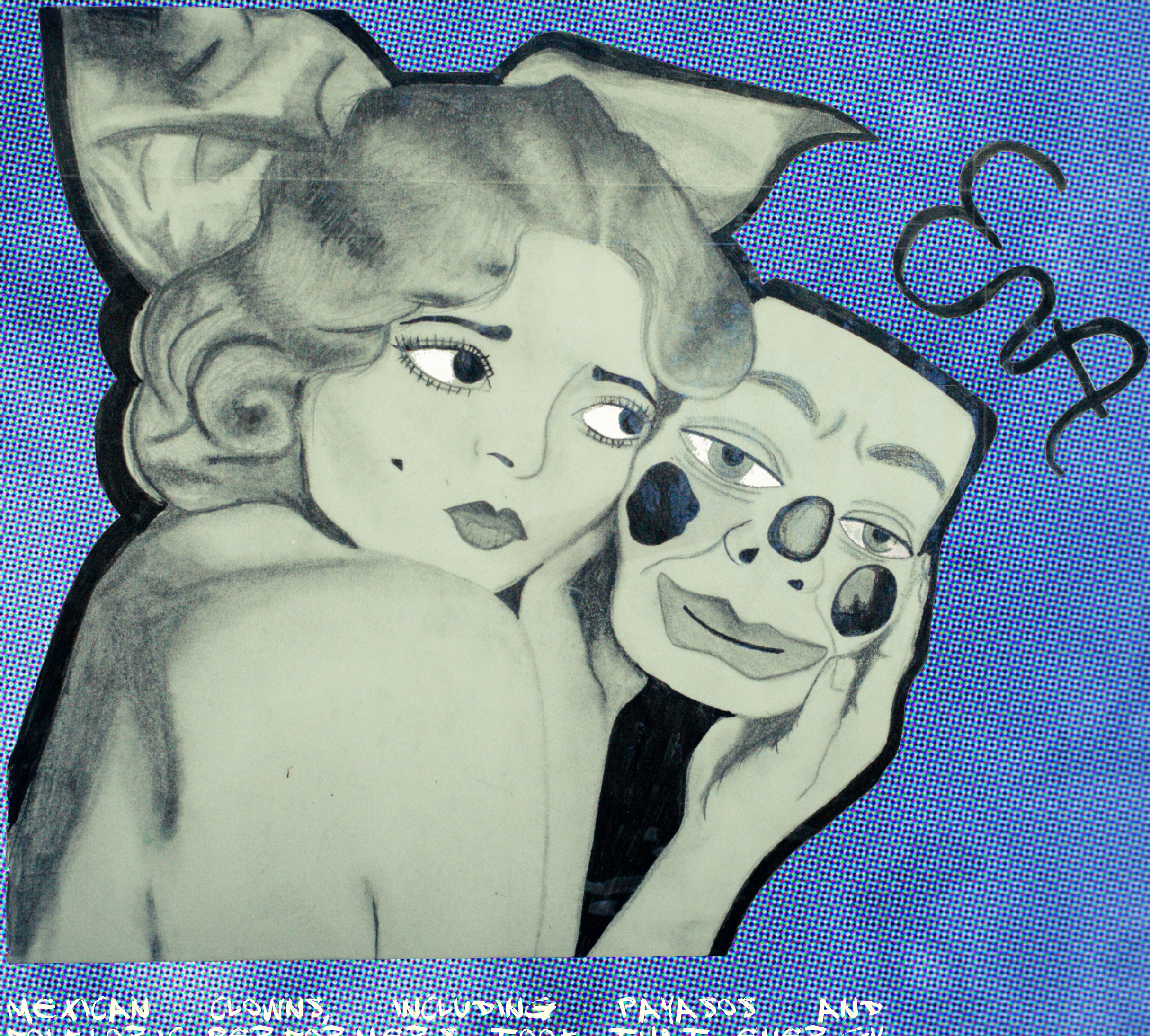
WHAT DID THE INSECT'S FRIENDS SAY WHEN SHE
SPREAD HER WINGS? "GIRL, YOU BUTTER FLY"


FOLLOW THE BEAT
II
Limited edition
Artist: Donald Walker

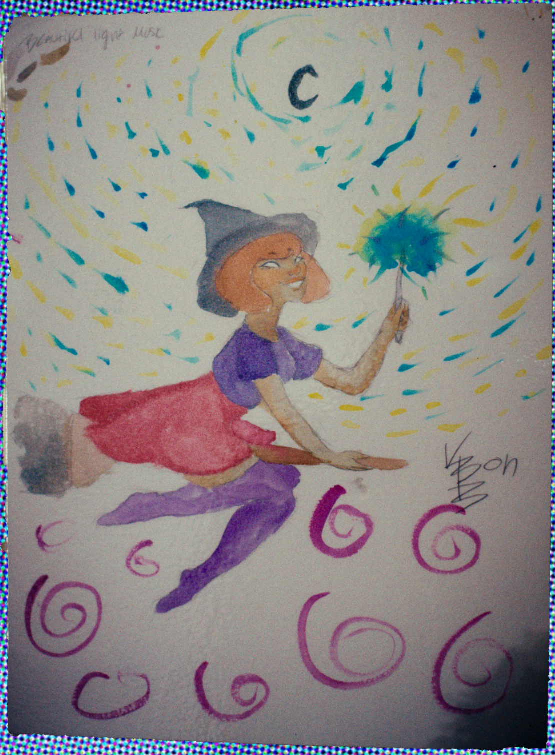


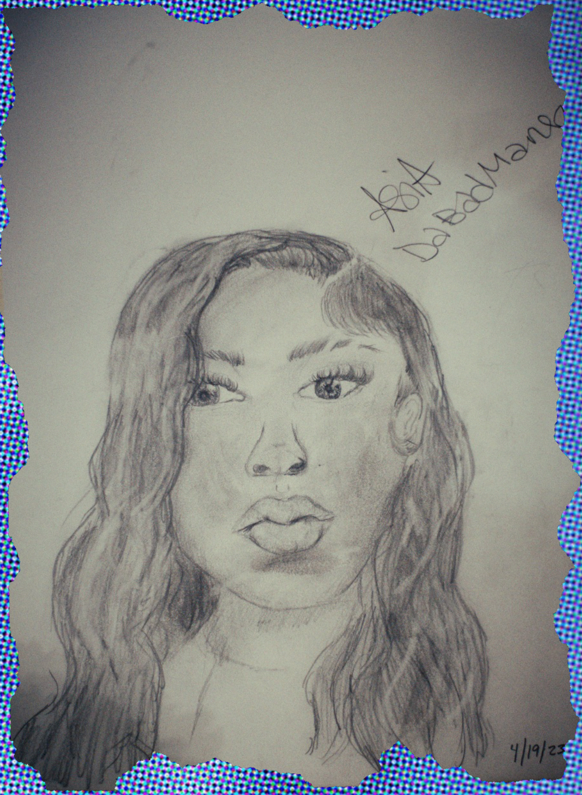
AH YES, "LIMITED EDITION". THE ARTIST'S WAY OF SAYING, "AFTER I SELL THIS PIECE, I CAN FINALLY MORTGAGE A HOUSE!"

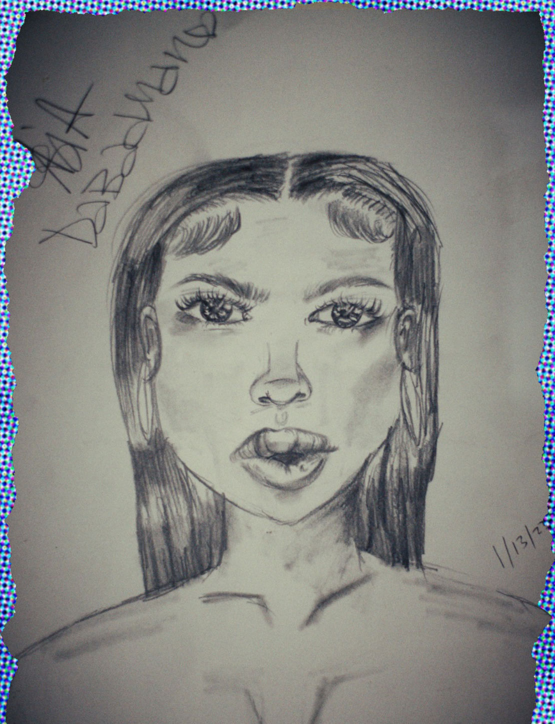
CLOWNS HAVE ALWAYS WALKED THE LINE BETWEEN LAUGHTER AND UNEASE. FROM MEDIEVAL JESTERS WHO RISKED MOCKING KINGS TO CIRCUS PERFORMERS WHOSE PAINTED SMILES COULD UNSETTLE, THEIR HISTORY CARRIES A HINT OF CHAOS AND FEAR.

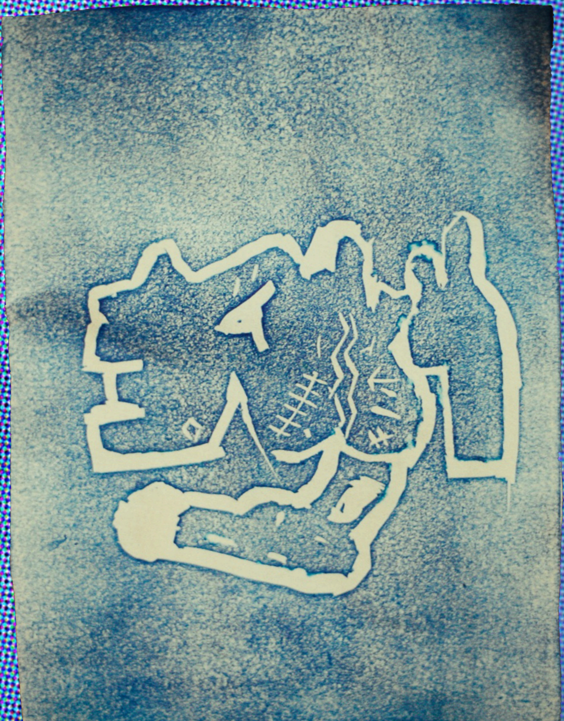


MEXICAN CLOWNS, INCLUDING PAYASOS AND FOLKLORIC PERFORMERS, TOOK THAT ENERGY AND TURNED IT INTO SOMETHING UNIQUELY CULTURAL, MIXING SLAPSTICK, SOCIAL COMMENTARY, AND COMMUNITY STORYTELLING.

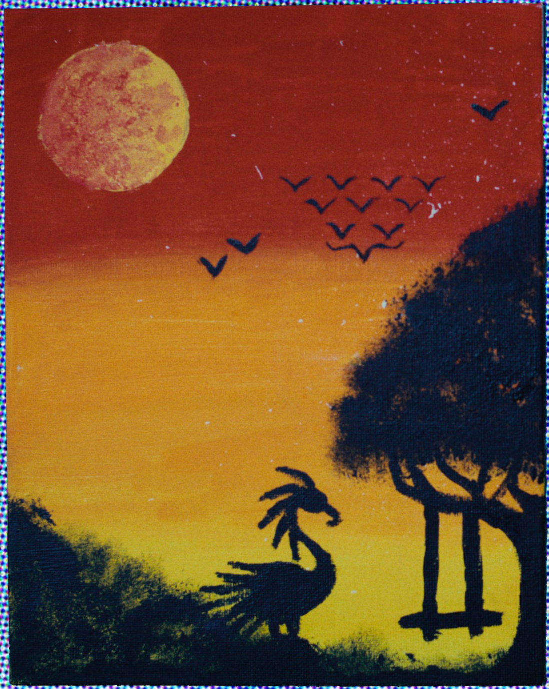

Beautiful liquid muse
VBon

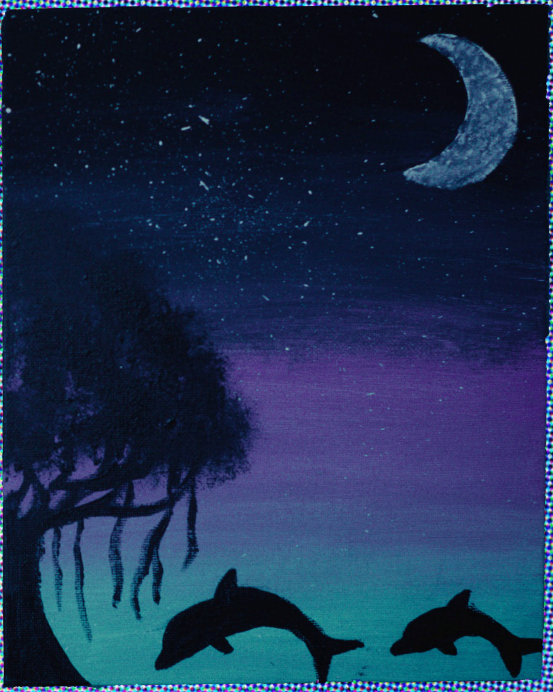

Asia
DaBadMane
4/19/23

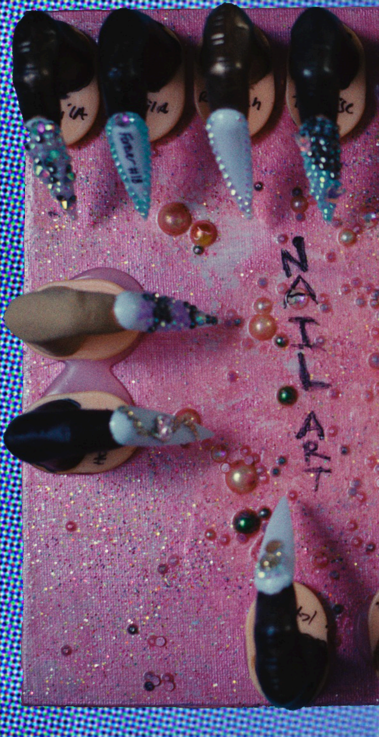

Asia
DaBadMane
1/13/2



BIRDS FLYING IN THE SUNSET, DOLPHINS SWIMMING AT NIGHT, WHAT APP
COSMOTOLOGIST ON OUR HANDS. AND SOME BEAUTIFUL UNDER WAT



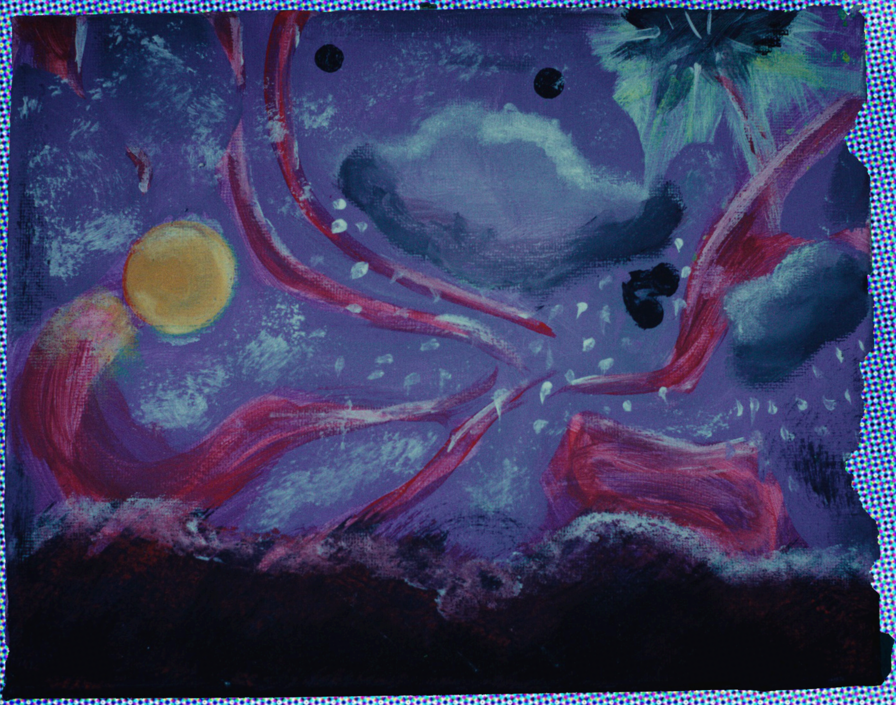




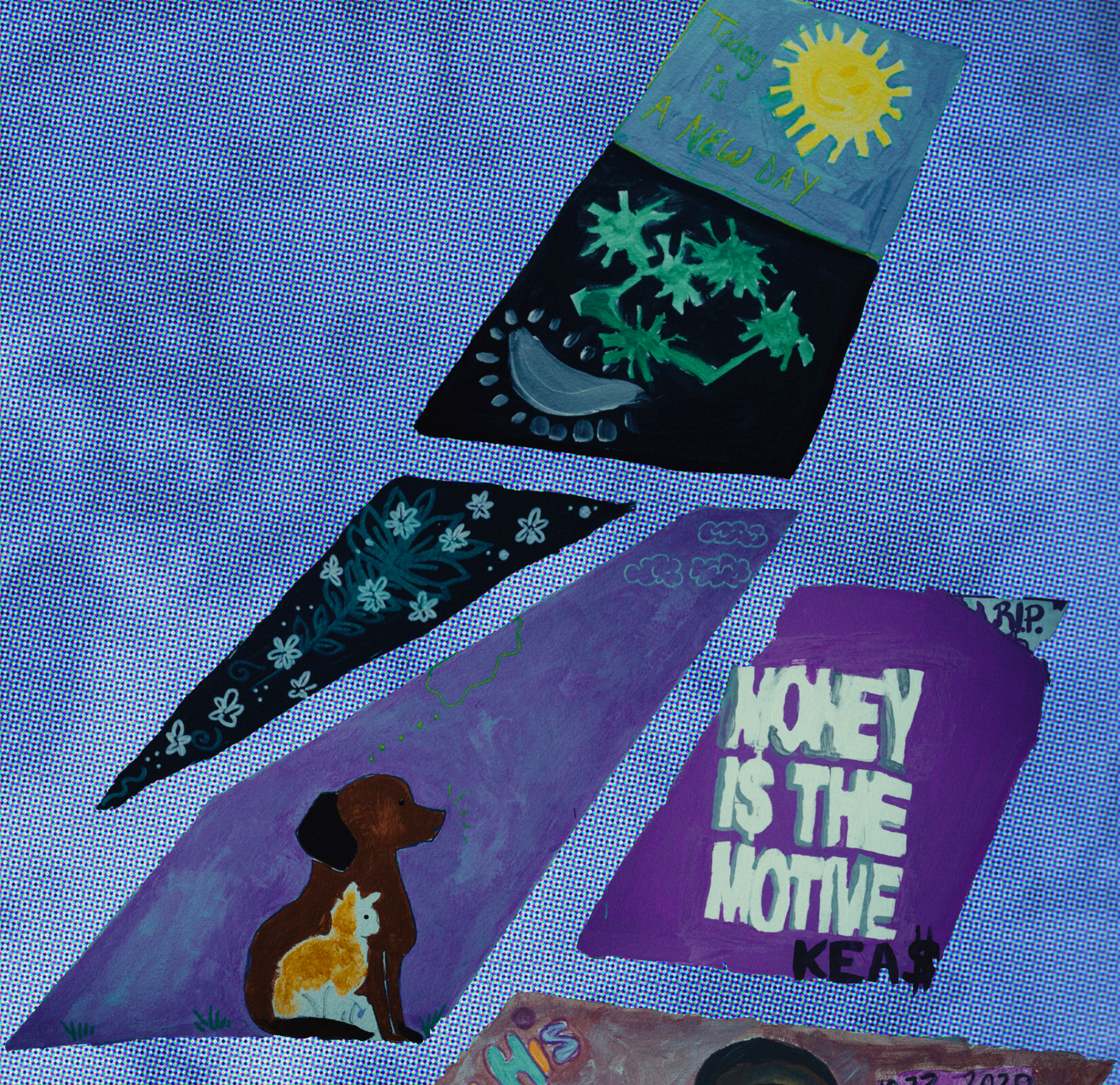
AGAIN... BIRDS FLYING IN THE SUNSET, DOLPHINS SWIMMING AT NIGHT,
PERHAPS A COSMOTOLOGIST ON OUR HANDS. AND SOME BEAUTIFUL UNDE

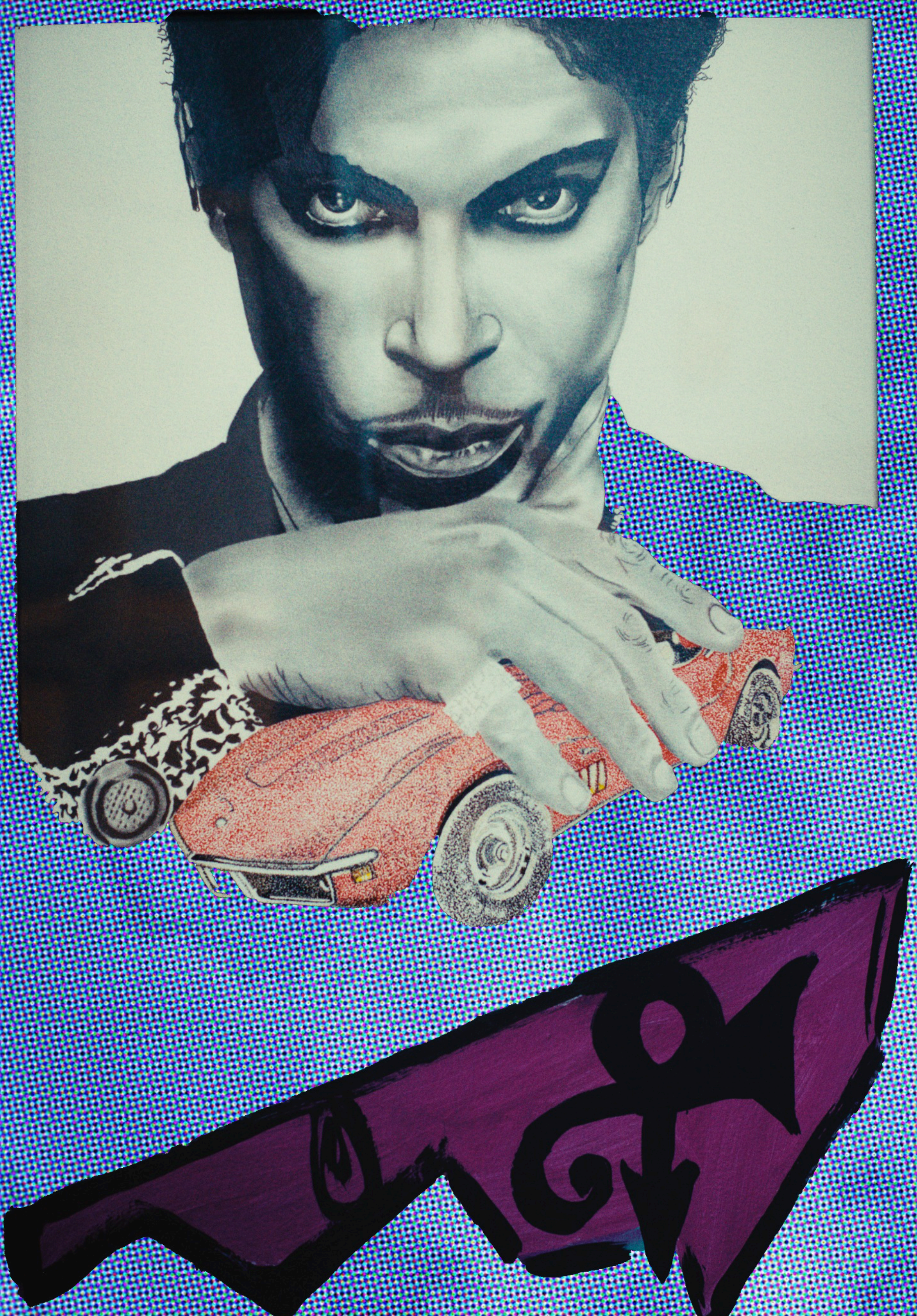
PEARS TO BE SOMEONE THAT IS PASSIONATE ABOUT NAILS. PERHAPS A
TER ART. ALMOST LOOKS LIKE A SQUID, BUT NOT EXACTLY SURE.

Bootcamp
Sept '24

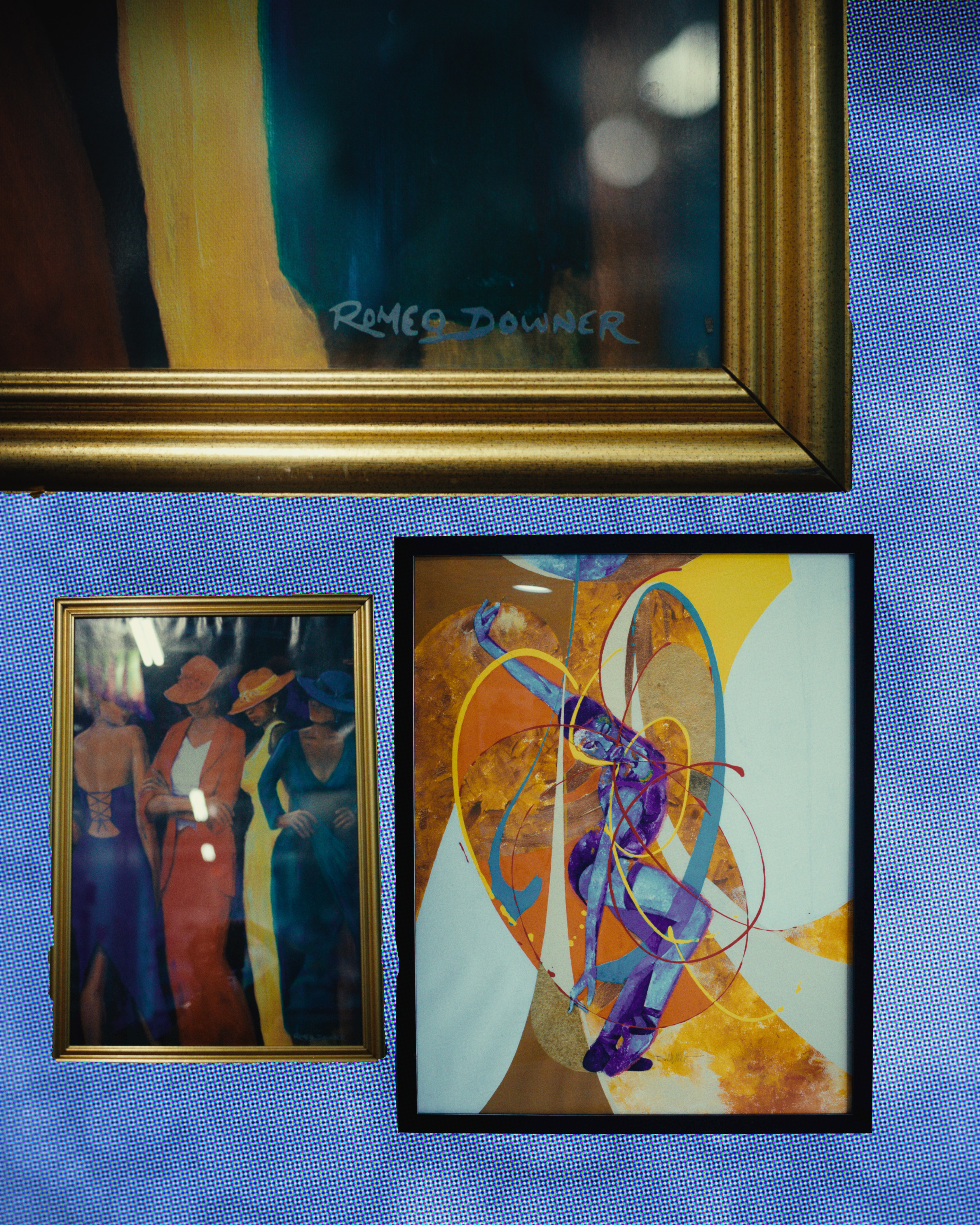


WHAT APPEARS TO BE SOMEONE THAT IS PASSIONATE ABOUT NAILS.
R WATER ART. ALMOST LOOKS LIKE A SQUID, BUT NOT EXACTLY SURE.


Today is A NEW DAY
R.I.P.
MONEY IS THE MOTIVE
KEA$
SAY His NAME
1973 2020

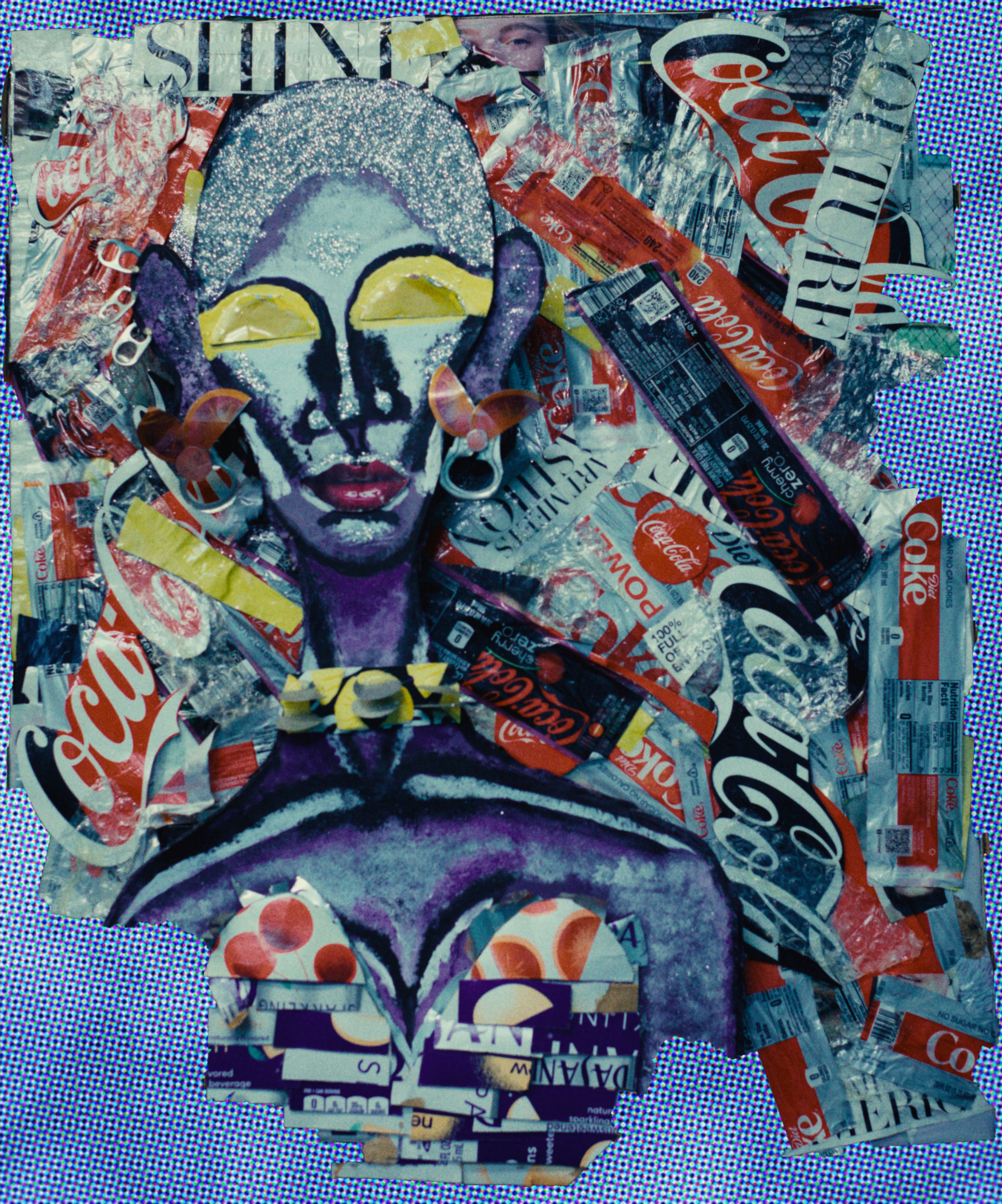


PRINCE WITH WHAT APPEARS TO BE A CORVETTE? NOW THE QUESTION IS; IS IT A SMALL CAR OR IS PRINCE A GIANT? YOU DECIDE. OH.. IT IS A CORVETTE.. A LITTLE RED CORVETTE. THEREFORE IF IT'S LITTLE. PRINCE IS INDEED, A GIANT.



ROMEO DOWNER

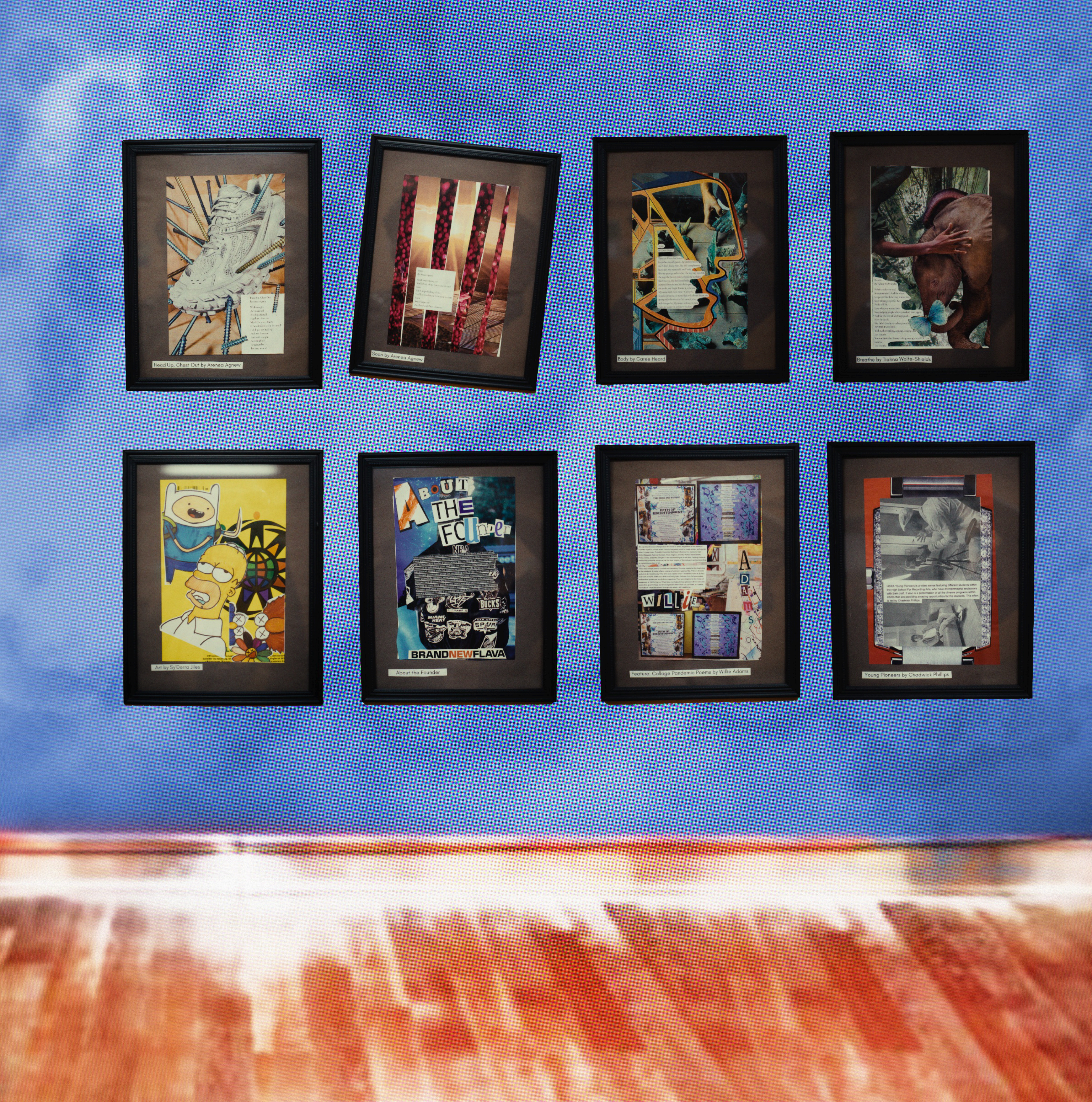
— THIS ART IS MADE OUT OF RECYCLED MATERIALS. IT LOOKS LIKE COCA COLA PLASTIC WRAP AND CANS. IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY, YOU CAN SEE THE SODA CAN, TOP THINGY, BEING USED AS EARRINGS. THAT IS COOL.

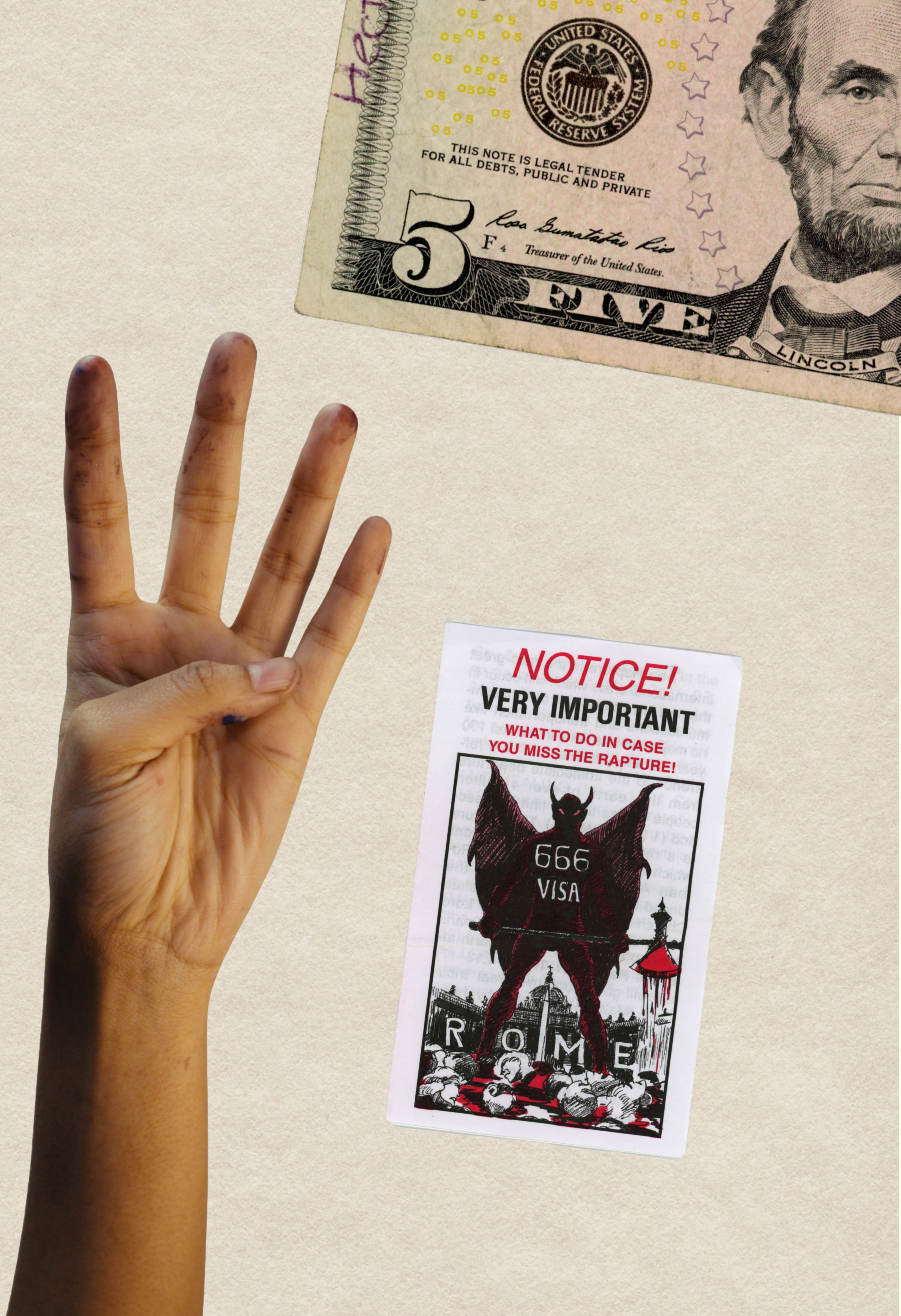

SHINE
Coca-Cola
Coke
cherry zero
Diet Coke
POWER
100% FULL OF ENERGY
NO SUGAR NO CALORIES
Nutrition Facts

STANDING WITH HANDS BEHIND YOUR BACK, LOOKING UP WITH OBSERVATION. DOING THAT LITTLE SLOW STEP TO THE SIDE. YOU DO INDEED FEEL LIKE DRINKING A BEVERAGE WITH YOUR PINKY UP BECAUSE YOU DON'T DO THIS OFTEN AND YOU MUST SAY, YOU FEEL VERY INQUISITIVE.

PRECIOUS
ARTISTS
SHOW
POWER
Young Pioneers by Chadwick Phillips
Feature: Asia Brown
ASK
FAMILY
RESPECT 2
COMMUNITY
EDUCATION
history and culture
black citizens
Therapy
incredible
create
Legacy
your future.
Does It Her Way
AZMIN TALE
GET OUT OF YOUR OWN HEAD
speak life into me.
of Encouragement by Jazmin Dillard
Feature: Asia Brown
Feelings of My Flower by Asia'jnae Wraggs
Somedays by Arenea Agnew

ON THIS WALL, IS THERE ONE CROOKED FRAME? OR ARE THERE 15 CROOKED FRAMES? ALL ABOUT PERSPECTIVE.


Head Up, Chest Out by Arenea Agnew
Soon by Arenea Agnew
Body by Caree Heard
Breathe by Tiahna Wolfe-Shields
Art by Sy'Derra Jiles
ABOUT THE FOUNDER
BRANDNEWFLAVA
About the Founder
WILLIE
ADAMS
Feature: Collage Pandemic Poems by Willie Adams
Young Pioneers by Chadwick Phillips


UNITED STATES FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM
THIS NOTE IS LEGAL TENDER
FOR ALL DEBTS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
5
F 4
Rosa Gumataotao Rios
Treasurer of the United States.
FIVE
LINCOLN
NOTICE!
VERY IMPORTANT
WHAT TO DO IN CASE
YOU MISS THE RAPTURE!
666
VISA
ROME

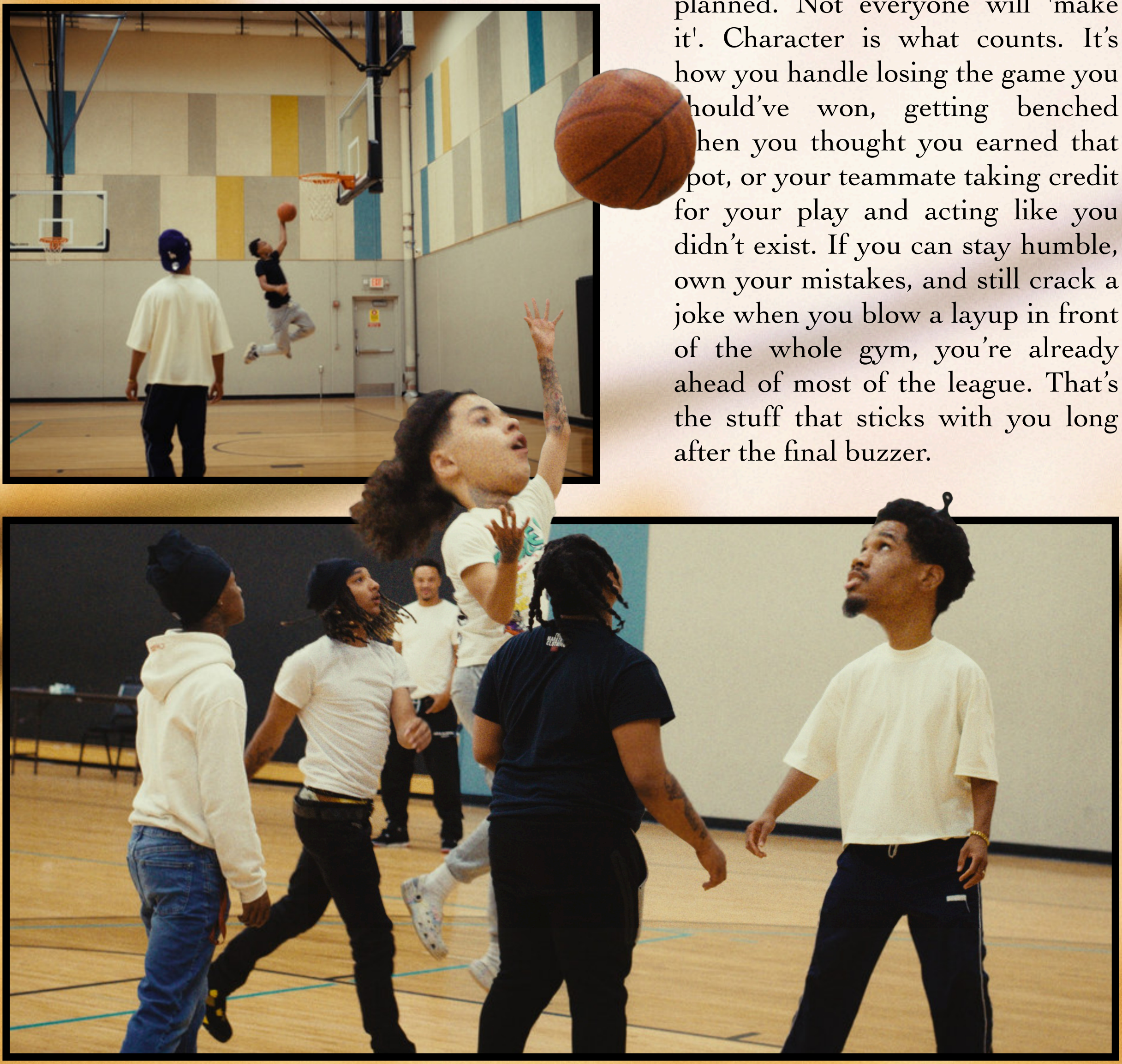
D STATES
ERICA
5
SERIES 20
F 244
Waist
FEARS
than your
be bigg

THE ODDS

Out of a million boys who grow up wanting to play in the NBA, only about 400,000 will even make it onto a high school team. From that group, only around 4,000 will go on to play college basketball. Out of those 4,000 players, only 35 will actually reach the NBA. And of those 35, just 7 will become full-time starters.

On top of that, the average NBA career lasts only about five years. So in reality, you have a million people all aiming for seven jobs that won’t even last a decade. I forgot where I heard that before, but it always stuck with me. It takes real audacity to believe in yourself to that extent.

In our youth, a lot of us thought the only thing that mattered was making it; NBA, NFL, whatever. But life doesn't always go as planned. Not everyone will 'make it'. Character is what counts. It’s how you handle losing the game you hould’ve won, getting benched hen you thought you earned that pot, or your teammate taking credit for your play and acting like you didn’t exist. If you can stay humble, own your mistakes, and still crack a joke when you blow a layup in front of the whole gym, you’re already ahead of most of the league. That’s the stuff that sticks with you long after the final buzzer.



SPALDING
LEGACY

HSRA
Welcome
Family - Respect - Community - Education
HOME
3:19
GUEST

DON'T BE SO DEFENSIVE

Not only does art imitate life, but sports as well. In basketball, defense is about control. You stay low, watch your man, anticipate their moves, and react without panicking. Life works the same way. Playing defense in real life means protecting yourself, setting boundaries, and responding thoughtfully instead of letting situations knock you off balance.

But let's be clear about the difference between playing defense and **being defensive**. You ever play ball with [illegible]one who's [illegible] eally played? They don't know the rules, they be travelling, they foul, they reach, they make mistakes. It's easy to get irritated, but when you step back and think, "Alright, all he knows how to do is play football" it stops being personal. You realize, he's just used to tackling folks. Being defensive, on the other hand, is reacting out of fear r ego, snapping at people, r trying to prove yourself [illegible] every turn. It makes you tight, predictable, and easy to read. And let's be honest, I love the sport, but basketball's got some of the most whiningest athletes you'll ever see. Everybody crying about a call, everyone pointing at the ref, everyone acting like the world is out to get them. I say this to give a visual of how it looks off the court. If that made you feel some type of way, you failed the test and it applies to you. Don't be so defensive.

Real-life defense is knowing when to move, when to block, and when to let things slide. You adjust, instead of getting your legs swept from under you by the football player that decided to guard you, there's a chance you might start utilizing that mid range jumper. Now you realize, "Shoot, my mid range could use a little work". The people who master that stay in the game, keep their balance, and come out ahead; even when everything around them is trying to knock them down. They train for all scenarios and though they expect the best, they're prepared for the worse.

Now apply that to life off the court.

A sports commentator by the name of Heywood Broun said, “Sports don’t build character. They reveal it.” That’s all it is. They just show what’s already in you. Character is in how you react. You can curse, throw your shoe, and act like the world is out to get you, or you can stay in the game, handle your business, and keep your head.

Sports do not lie. Life does not lie. It exposes you. It will show when you are petty, when you are insecure, when your ego is running the show. And sometimes, if you pay attention, it will even make you laugh at how ridiculous you look losing your cool over nothing. The game does not care, the people do not care, and the sooner you get that, the better you are going to be.

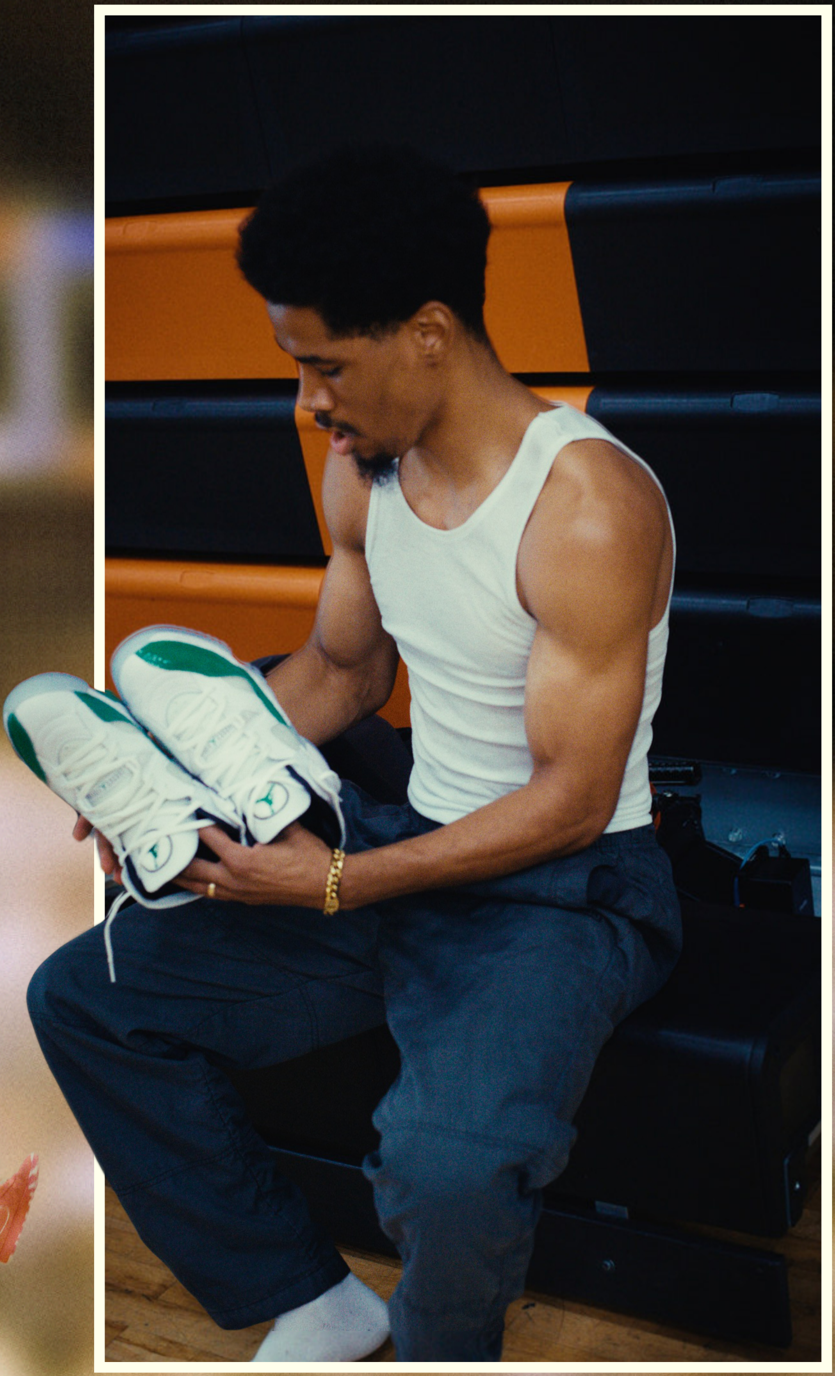
MURRAY'S GET BACK

I played Murray twice while I was visiting. I caught him slipping the first time. It was one of those games where neither of us was dressed to be doing anything athletic, but the love of hooping will make you play in jeans and church socks if you have to.

But the next time I came back in town, he hunted me down like I owed him money. Found me in the studio, leaned in the doorway like, "I need my rematch" I should have known right then that I was about to see another side of him.

He got his revenge too. I laced up thinking I was gon' take him to school. I disrespected his jumper. I left him open like I was doing him a favor. He made me pay for every inch. I kept missing and he kept scoring. I took my slice of humble pie losing 11 to 5. Until next time, Murray.

Until next time....



photographed by ***Khloe Kruchowski***

CLUB

The girls were putting me on game about the difference between school volleyball and club volleyball, and I didn't realize it was that crazy out there. Club volleyball is basically a secret society where what happens in the gym stays in the gym. Coaches barking like drill sergeants, parents acting like their kid is LeBron with a ponytail, and players getting judged before they even serve the ball. And not just on skill either; body type too. Too tall, too short, too thick, too skinny… they size you up like farm animals. Of course, we know with building greatness, there comes a range of territory one must cover, overcome and endure; ain't nothing wrong with it. However, if you ain't trying to go pro, you may as well save yourself the heartache and find another hobby.

On the otherside, volleyball at High School for Recording Arts is its own thing. Most of these kids did not grow up playing club volleyball or running around in kneepads.

A lot of them walk into the gym looking at the net like, "Alright, what we doing here?"

HSRA is full of artists and musicians and kids who spend more time singing runs opposed to running drills. So, volleyball becomes this break from everything. Just a team, a ball, and whoever is brave enough to take the first serve.

People are calling the ball late, diving on the floor like they saw it in a movie, and celebrating points they did not even score. And somehow, through all that chaos, they start figuring it out. They start trusting each other. They start communicating. They start moving like a team instead of six strangers. It shows them what it feels like to show up for each other. By the end of the season, you can see the confidence building. You can see kids who barely spoke on day one yelling "I got it" across the whole gym.

Yes yes, I know it sounds like a Disney movie, sunshine and rainbows; but at HSRA, volleyball is not about trophies. It's not that they're not aiming to get better or trying to win; but it's more about giving these young people another lane to grow in. Another space to laugh, compete, and show a different side of themselves. Another reminder that they can succeed in rooms they never pictured themselves in.

And look, I understand the nature of sports. Competition is part of the deal. We not gon' be all soft and act like sports don't call for rigorous training and tough skin; but some of these young folks are just looking for an outlet, not a career. I even hopped in on one of their practices, and man… I ain't gon' lie to you, it felt good to just laugh and enjoy something without it turning into a life audition. It was nice watching them talk trash, celebrate a point like they won a championship, and just have fun; I get why they prefer this side of the game.

"MA'AM YES MA'AM"

In the words of a **club** volleyball coach,

"Alright, listen up you piano playing sissies. If you've never played volleyball before, don't panic. Everybody's first time looks the same; you're out there squinting at the ceiling lights saying in your head, *"Lord, if this ball hits me in the face..."*

But volleyball is actually simple, not saying it's easy, but it is simple. Two teams. One net. One ball. The objective? Put the ball on the other team's floor before they put it on yours. That's it.

You've got three main moves, and it ain't twirling around on your toes,

1. **The Pass:** Put your forearms together like you're begging for someone to pour you some hot cheetos and let the ball bounce off of them. Don't swing like you're chopping wood or you'll launch the ball into the parking lot. Think of it like you're guiding the ball.

2. **The Set:** Hands above your head, fingertips ready. Tap the ball up so your teammate c do something dramatic.

3. **The Spike:** This is the money-maker. You jump up, cock your arm back, and try to send the ball down with some flare, this is the perfect time to knock some wigs off. You probably won't pull this off on day one; but dream big.

You get **three hits** per side. Use them wisely. Every time your team wins a point while the other team is serving, you rotate. Did you hear me? Rotate!

Yes, ROTATE! You'd imagine, just let the best server serve the whole game. Nope, gotta have all the tools in your fanny pack. Futhermore, sooner or later you're going to be in the serving spot. And no, you can't fake a cramp. You gotta send it over the net, in bounds, and without making your whole team sigh like disappointed parents. Masking their irritation with the phrase, 'You got it babe!' Translation, "If we lose, we all know why".

Games usually go to **25**, win by two. That's the whole formula. No calculus. No "find x." Just boom, boom, boom; point.

Volleyball is fast, loud, and hard on the neck; not of the players but the people in the stands. If the sad excuses for players on the court can't seem to score a point and the game isn't interesting enough for you, try watching all the heads in the bleachers go left, right, left, right."

Sincerely,

Club Volleyball Coach

me
nity - Education
POSS
BONUS
FOULS
SCORE

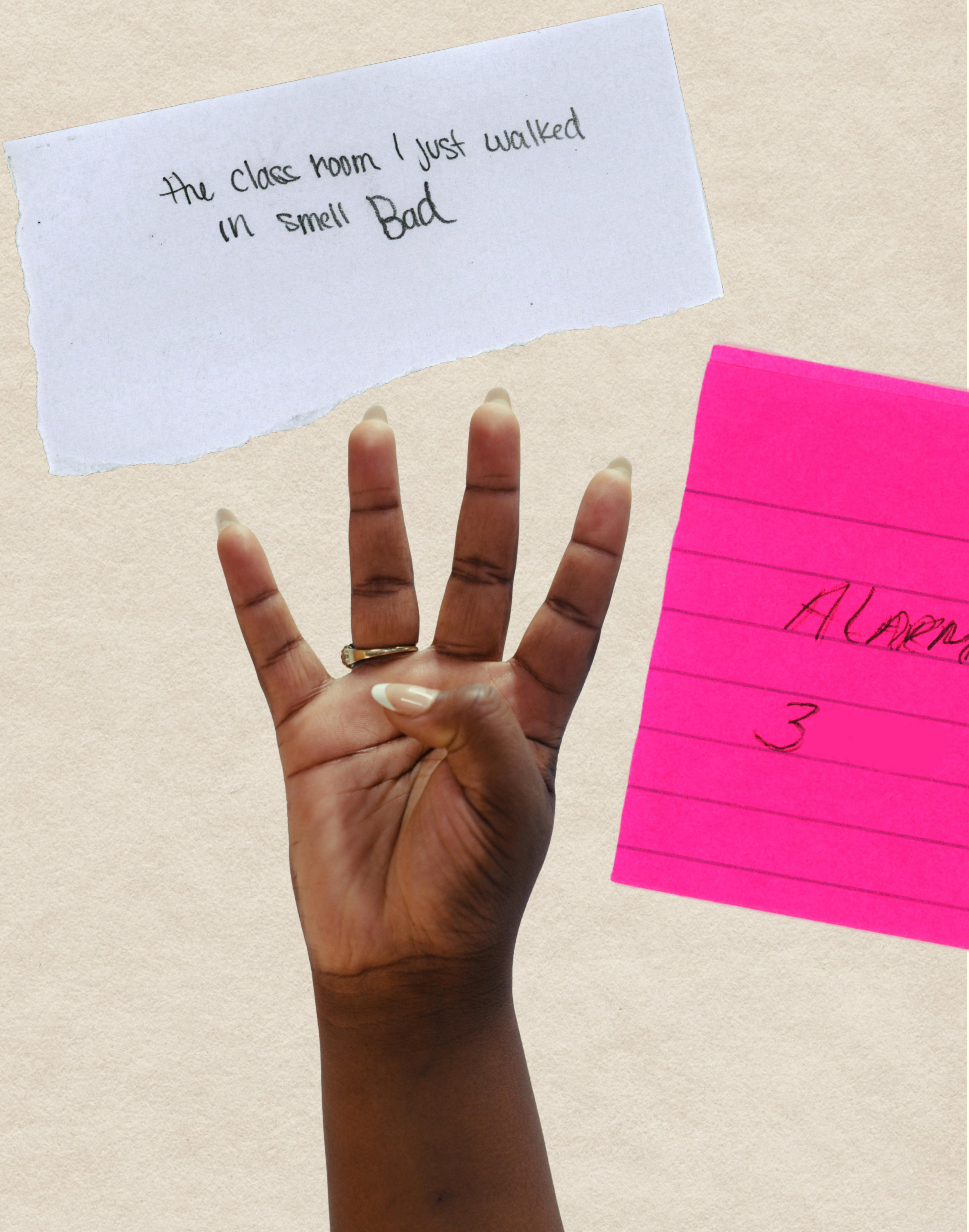
Every school has that one adult who does more than just play their role.
At HSRA, one of those adults is Jon Engelking. He is the reason the volleyball court feels less like a gym and more like a place where the girls can breathe, relax, and actually play without feeling like they need to perform for anybody. He is not doing the loud coach routine either. Jon has a calm leadership that says, "Look, we are here to work, but we are also here to enjoy this each other."

What makes Jon different is that he pays attention, and not just to technique or drills. He pays attention to how the girls feel when they walk in. Volleyball can get real judgmental real quick, especially with club players. They will tell you straight up that club is cutthroat. Body type, skill level, who you trained with, who your parents are, everything gets analyzed. Some of these girls came straight from that world, and you can see the relief on their faces when they realize Jon is not bringing any of that into the gym. He makes it clear that as long as you show up and put in effort, you belong.

Sometimes he allows the fellas to step in too, not to dominate or showboat, but to support the girls. Jon makes sure of that. He lets them jump in on drills, shag balls, set up plays, or help the girls run scrimmages. It is not about separation, it is about community and respect. He teaches the boys how to play with the girls, not over them. And they follow his lead because he sets the tone.

During my visit, I even joined in once. I am not out here trying to be the next Olympic outside hitter, but for a moment it felt good to just laugh, mess up, try again, and not take myself too seriously. You kind of forget adults are allowed to enjoy things too. Jon makes that possible because he curated a space where everyone can be human first and competitive second. He protects the integrity of not only the game, but the young people. I imagine that's why the kids keep coming back.

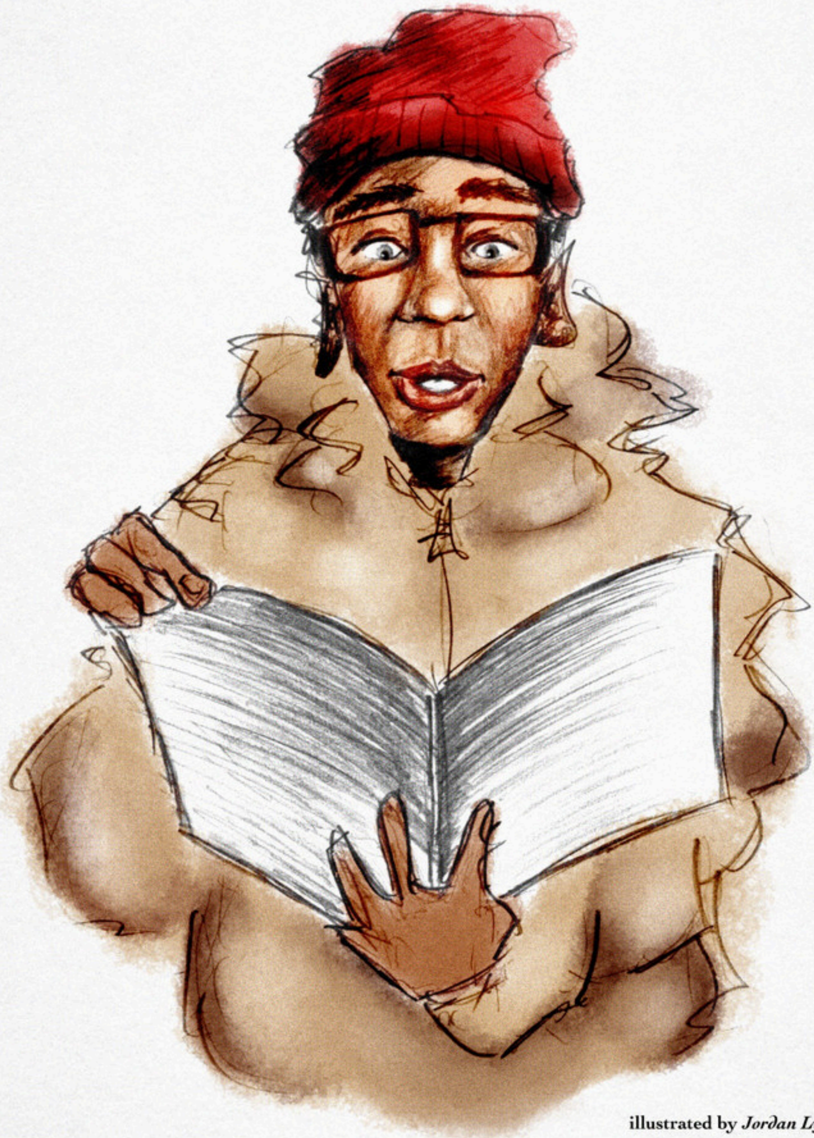
JON ENGELKING



the class hoom I just walked
in smell Bad

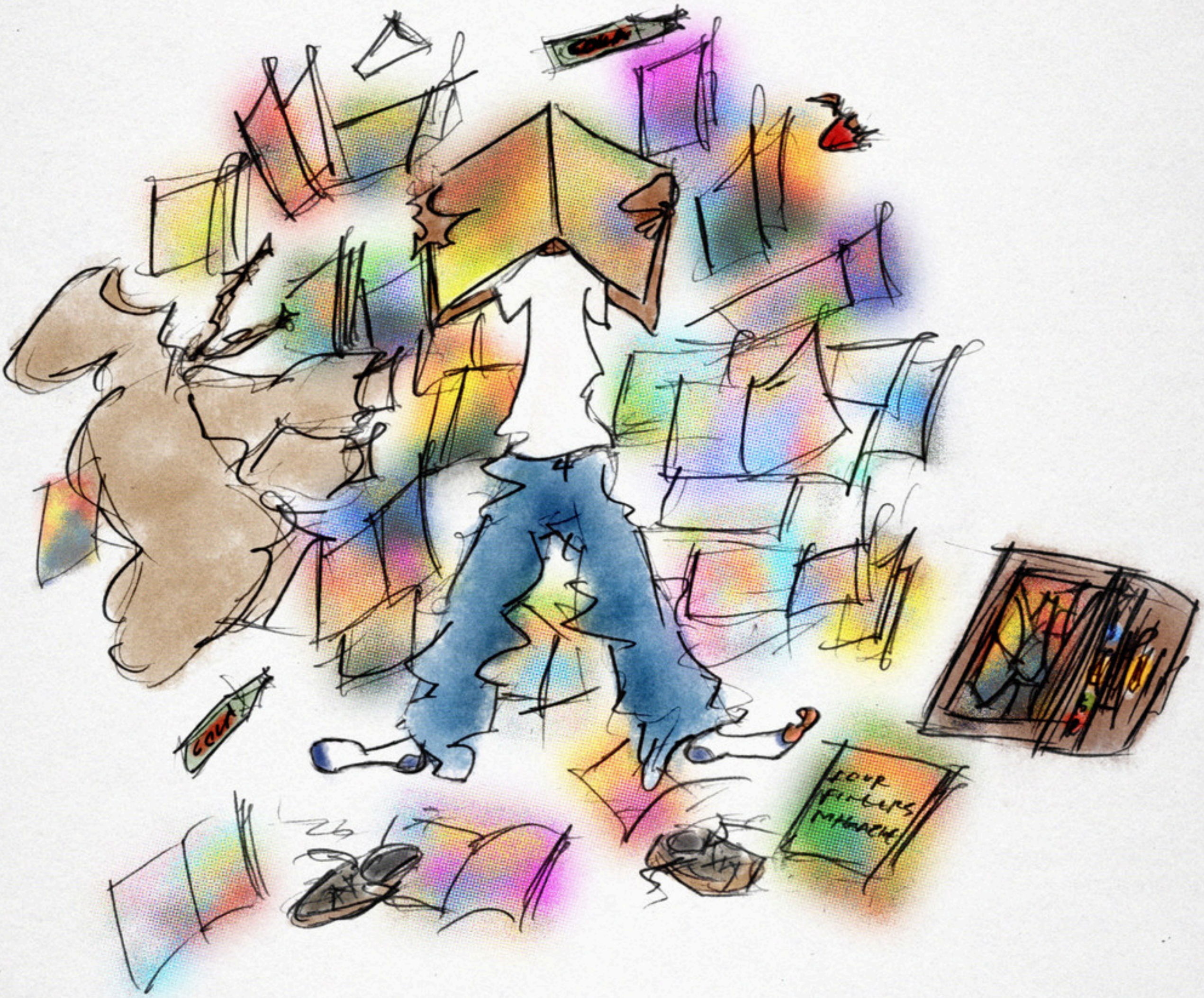
ALARM
3

TREASURE UNLOCKED



illustrated by *Jordan Lyles*

"...I went into my pops' study, and then he had a closet with a treasure chest in it. I open the treasure chest and there's a bunch of comic drawings. I would just spend like hours in my pops' study, just looking through these pictures, and then I asked my pops like, *"Who did these?"* And he said, *"I did."*



— *Pierre! Come Out Here and Eat!*

A LOVE 4 COMICS

October 22nd, 2025

Jordan:
All right, Pierre, so I'm learning that you got a love for comics.

Pierre:
Big love, man.

Jordan:
So take me back, whether it's childhood, maybe teenagehood, or even adulthood, where this love began and why it grew so strong.

Pierre:
Yeah, I went into my pops' study, and then he had a closet with a treasure chest in it. I open the treasure chest and there's a bunch of comic drawings. But they weren't characters I'd ever seen before. I'm like, "Who are these characters?" I would just spend like hours in my pops' study, just looking through these pictures, and then I asked my pops like, "Who did these?" And he said, "I did."

So my pops was like this dynamic drawer in college, and I ain't never seen him draw, like, in the home setting. This was just stuff that he kept from college. And so that started my love for just drawing. And then eventually he had this comic book diagram of, like, it's going to sound crazy, but like angels and spiritual warfare. And I just remember being a kid, just going through that diagram and then, like, these stories would come alive in my head. And then you could connect that to, like, the cartoons. So for me, that's where it started. It was like my dad's study, that comic of spiritual warfare, and then just everyday cartoons. It just awakened something inside of me, man. And that's where the love for comics started.

Jordan:
Man, okay. Tell me your top three comics.

Pierre:
Ooh. Top three comics. *Black Panther* number one by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Like, the mythos behind *Black Panther*, just like Kirby started, was dynamic. And it was very Afro-spiritual-centric. I got an anthology of the older comic books from *Black Panther*, and they're really deep. But how Ta-Nehisi Coates modernized that was like, it'll take you outer space. Like, literally, if you ever read it, it'll take you outer space and really give you just a deeper and richer appreciation for the *Black Panther* mythos.

Second, it's going to sound crazy to some people, but *Power Rangers*. They did it big. They got this whole series where they re-envisioned what would happen if Tommy did not turn over to good, and him and Rita actually saw their plan all the way through. And so they spent like the last five years flushing that out. Like, it's this big multiversal story. And dude, like, it is crazy. So I spent like the last five years digesting that. They finally wrapped it up. And, bro, that story really was powerful. And I'm a big *Power Rangers* fan since a kid, so to see them do that, like, yeah bro, that's crazy.

And then number three, where we at with it right now, number three, I would have to say the *Ninja Turtles*, bro. Like, they had a *Last Ronin* series, and it's like just the top three for me presently. They had a *Last Ronin* series, and they kept it a mystery on who the last Ninja Turtle was that survived this big war. And for it to be Mikey was ingenious, because for me, I'm like Raph's the hothead, Leonardo's the leader, Donnie's the intelligent one. But Mikey was the carefree jokester, right? He was the comedic relief. But to see him lose all of that because of the loss of his brothers, the loss of Splinter, the loss of Casey, the way he went out, it was crazy.

So they did their big with the *Last Ronin* series. It's really darker, and that's how the *Ninja Turtles* used to be. Like, the old comic books before it turned into a cartoon were really dark and gritty. So they returned to that and gave it a very powerful storyline. They might be making a movie out of it too. But yeah, so those are the top three presently. There's a whole bunch of other ones, but presently, yeah, there is.

Jordan:
Got it.

Pierre:
For sure. Yeah, the layers of the

storyline is important, man. You got to have a storyline.

Jordan:
I found myself throughout the week, or throughout the last couple of days, asking different students, "Do you still watch cartoons?" And it's funny now that we're having this conversation. I was and am a big lover of cartoons. I still watch cartoons. That's something I've always wanted to do, to produce my own cartoon. Furthermore, my question for you, do you still watch cartoons?

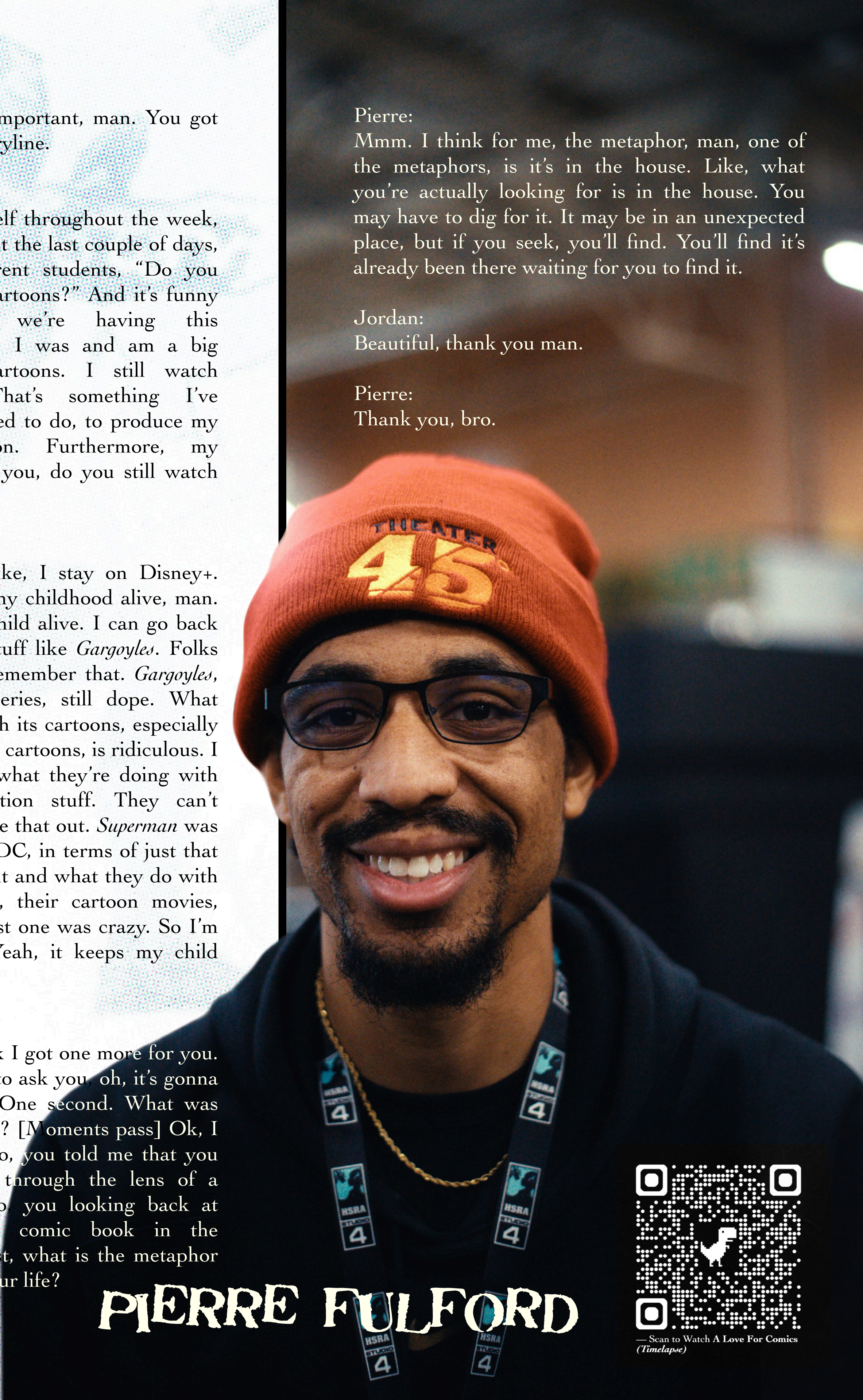
Pierre:
Oh yeah. Like, I stay on Disney+. That keeps my childhood alive, man. That inner child alive. I can go back and watch stuff like *Gargoyles*. Folks don't even remember that. *Gargoyles*, *Spider-Man* series, still dope. What DC does with its cartoons, especially like its movie cartoons, is ridiculous. I don't know what they're doing with their live-action stuff. They can't seem to figure that out. *Superman* was alright. But DC, in terms of just that whole imprint and what they do with their movies, their cartoon movies, bruh, that last one was crazy. So I'm a big fan. Yeah, it keeps my child alive, man.

Jordan:
Okay, I think I got one more for you. I was about to ask you, oh, it's gonna come back. One second. What was that question? [Moments pass] Ok, I remember. So, you told me that you look at life through the lens of a metaphor. So, you looking back at finding that comic book in the treasure chest, what is the metaphor for that in your life?

Pierre:
Mmm. I think for me, the metaphor, man, one of the metaphors, is it's in the house. Like, what you're actually looking for is in the house. You may have to dig for it. It may be in an unexpected place, but if you seek, you'll find. You'll find it's already been there waiting for you to find it.

Jordan:
Beautiful, thank you man.

Pierre:
Thank you, bro.



PIERRE FULFORD

— Scan to Watch **A Love For Comics** *(Timelapse)*

Letter from the editor

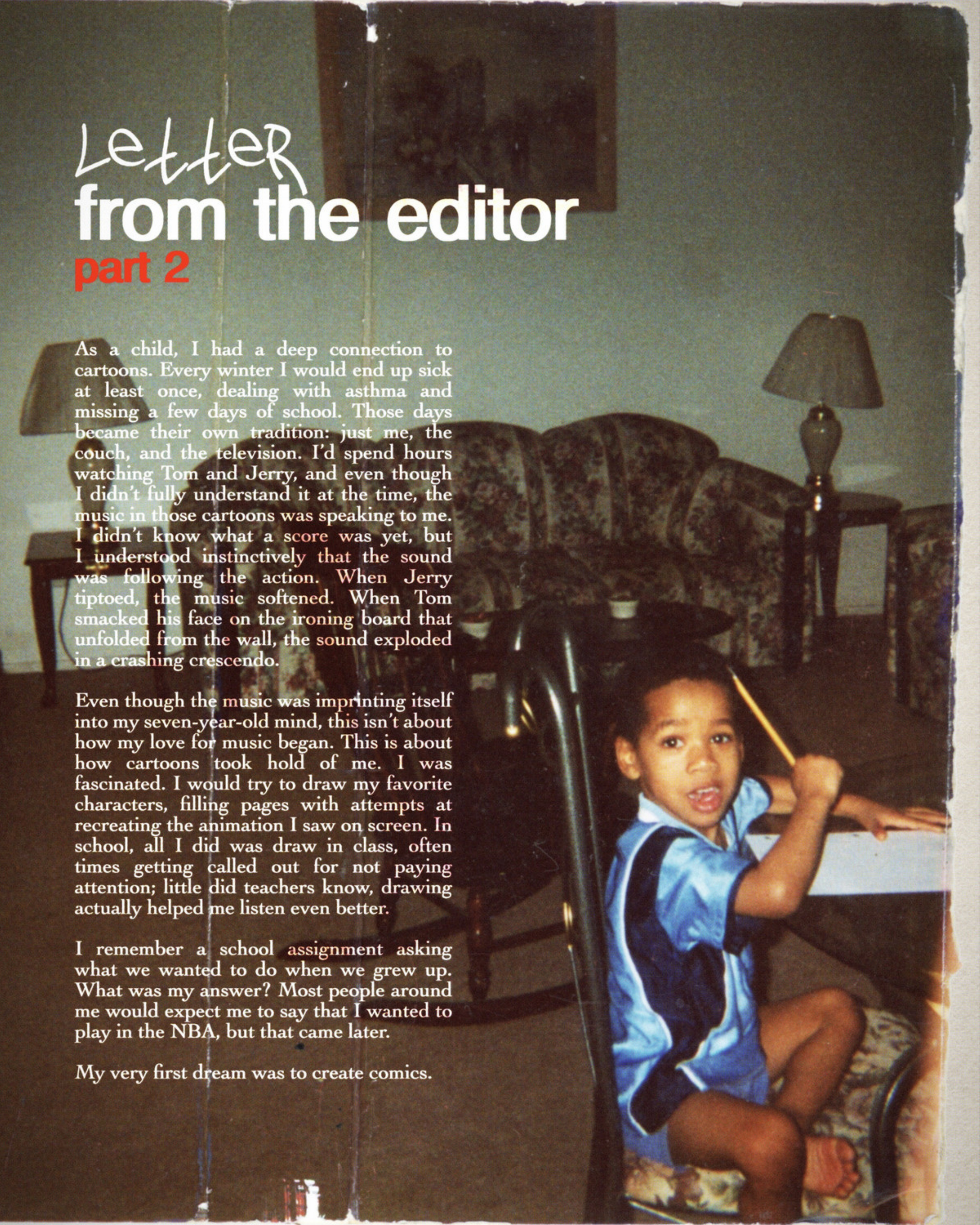
part 2

As a child, I had a deep connection to cartoons. Every winter I would end up sick at least once, dealing with asthma and missing a few days of school. Those days became their own tradition: just me, the couch, and the television. I'd spend hours watching Tom and Jerry, and even though I didn't fully understand it at the time, the music in those cartoons was speaking to me. I didn't know what a score was yet, but I understood instinctively that the sound was following the action. When Jerry tiptoed, the music softened. When Tom smacked his face on the ironing board that unfolded from the wall, the sound exploded in a crashing crescendo.

Even though the music was imprinting itself into my seven-year-old mind, this isn't about how my love for music began. This is about how cartoons took hold of me. I was fascinated. I would try to draw my favorite characters, filling pages with attempts at recreating the animation I saw on screen. In school, all I did was draw in class, often times getting called out for not paying attention; little did teachers know, drawing actually helped me listen even better.

I remember a school assignment asking what we wanted to do when we grew up. What was my answer? Most people around me would expect me to say that I wanted to play in the NBA, but that came later.

My very first dream was to create comics.



Life has a way of circling back. The idea for this magazine came from that same spark. I realized that not only could this be a space for all the stories, creativity, and culture I wanted to share, but it could also be a place to finally make room for the comics I dreamed to create. And even more than that, to give someone else the room I wish I had as a child. There are kids out there right now just like me, sketching at the top corner of their homework packet and dreaming of seeing their work somewhere real.

So welcome to the comic section. A place not just for my creations, but for the next generation of storytellers, animators, and dreamers who deserve a place to put their work in the world.

WESTSOUTH HOSPITALITY

a comic by ***Jordan Lyles***

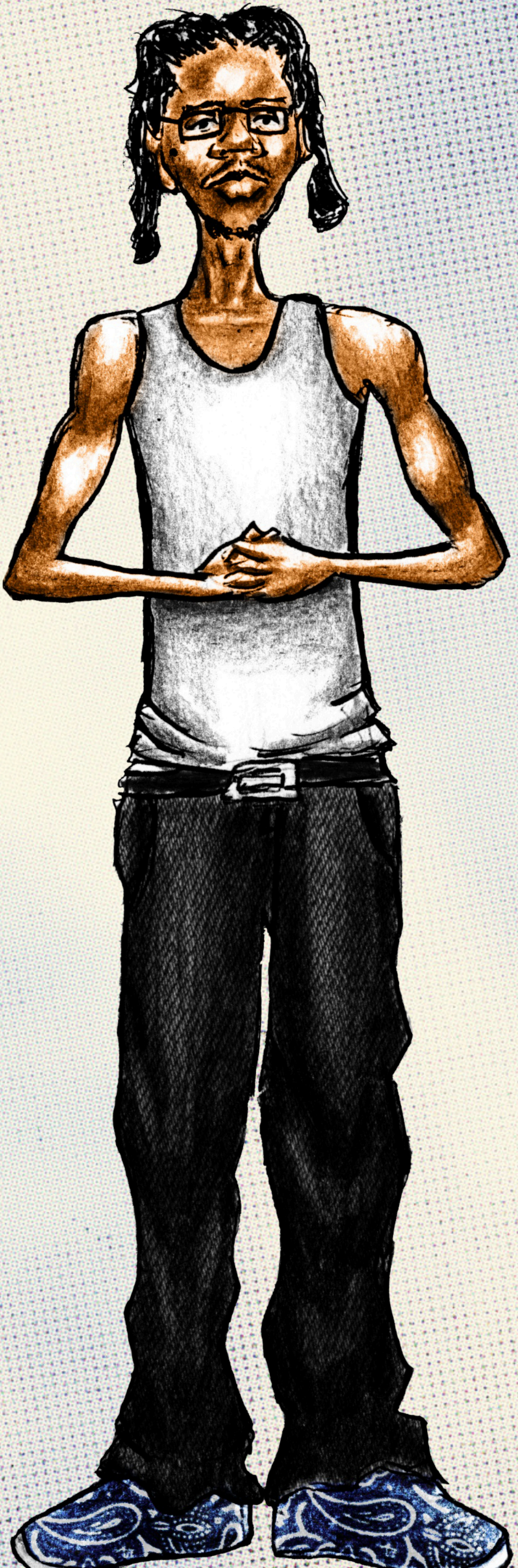
INTRODUCING WESTSOUTH HOSPITALITY

Langston Jr. is the older brother by five years. His dad, Langston Sr. went to jail for a crime he didn't commit when Langston was 2. During a short furlough, Mo' was conceived. After that, their dad went back to finish a 12-year sentence. By the time he got out for good, Mo' was 9, old enough to have a dad during some of the most important years, while Langston had already been out in the streets, getting into trouble. Langston bounced in and out of juvenile hall and ended up doing nine years at 18. In jail, he found God. By the time he got out at 27, he was ready to rebuild. Growing up, Langston often bragged about his dad's time in jail and thought it made him look tough.

Mo', now 22, grew up with their dad guiding him. He had the structure, lessons, and direction Langston never got. Even though he is younger, Mo' often guides Langston, helping him make better choices.

Their mom, Patsy, kept the household together, balancing care with discipline and instilling faith and responsibility. These lessons stuck with both boys. Now the brothers have decided to move out together. The parents are just a call away, sometimes checking in to make sure Langston is keeping an eye on Mo', seeing him as the older brother and a man of God. What they don't realize is that Mo', the younger brother, is actually the wise in his own right, often guiding Langston in ways only he can.

Inspiration—
The brothers' names come from two people. Langston is inspired by Langston Hughes, who represents a creative that is concerned with the social impact of his work. Mo' comes from Frank Morrison, a painter whose work I've always respected. However, Mo' is not short for Morrison, it is short for money. Creating art is one of the greatest forms of currency. Together, their names mean poetry is art and art is currency. Life itself is poetry in motion. The phrase 'Mo' Money, Mo' Problems' adds another layer, a reminder that money often disrupts creative purity. It is a reminder to self to never create just to chase money and get paid what you feel is due, but to focus on the hues, the work itself. Lastly, I have always been a fan of The Boondocks, and Langston Hughes' last name reminds me of Huey and Riley, which fits the rhetoric between Langston & Mo'.



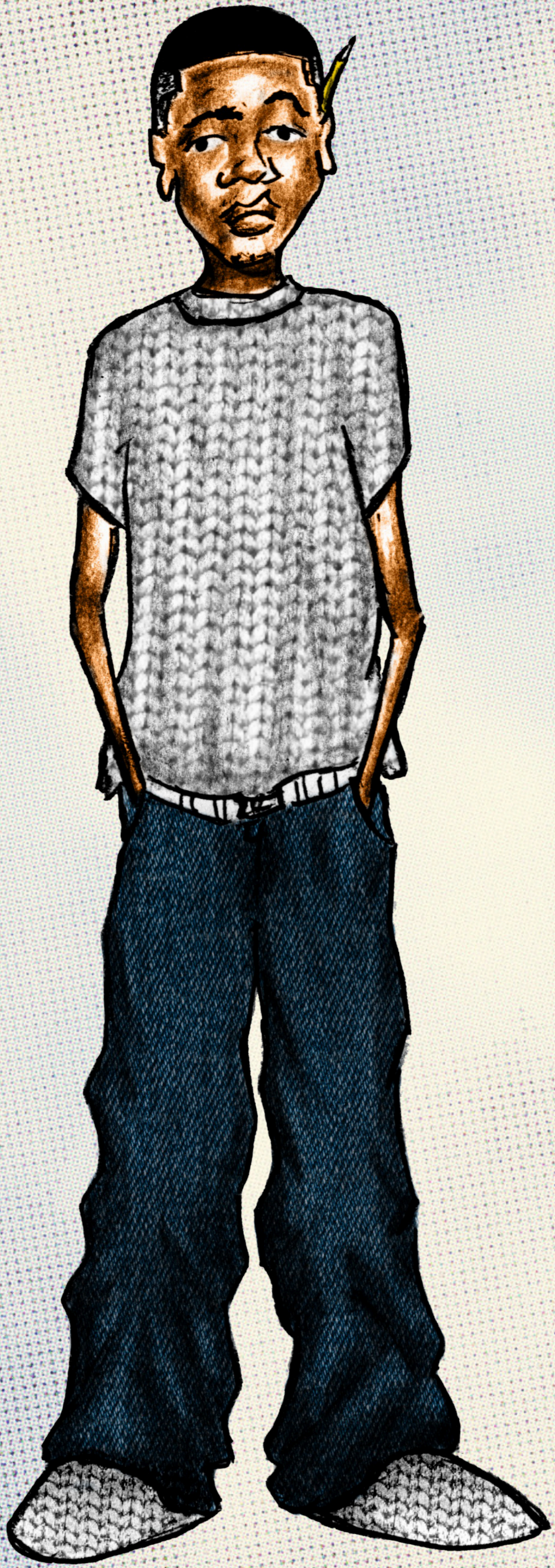
LANGSTON

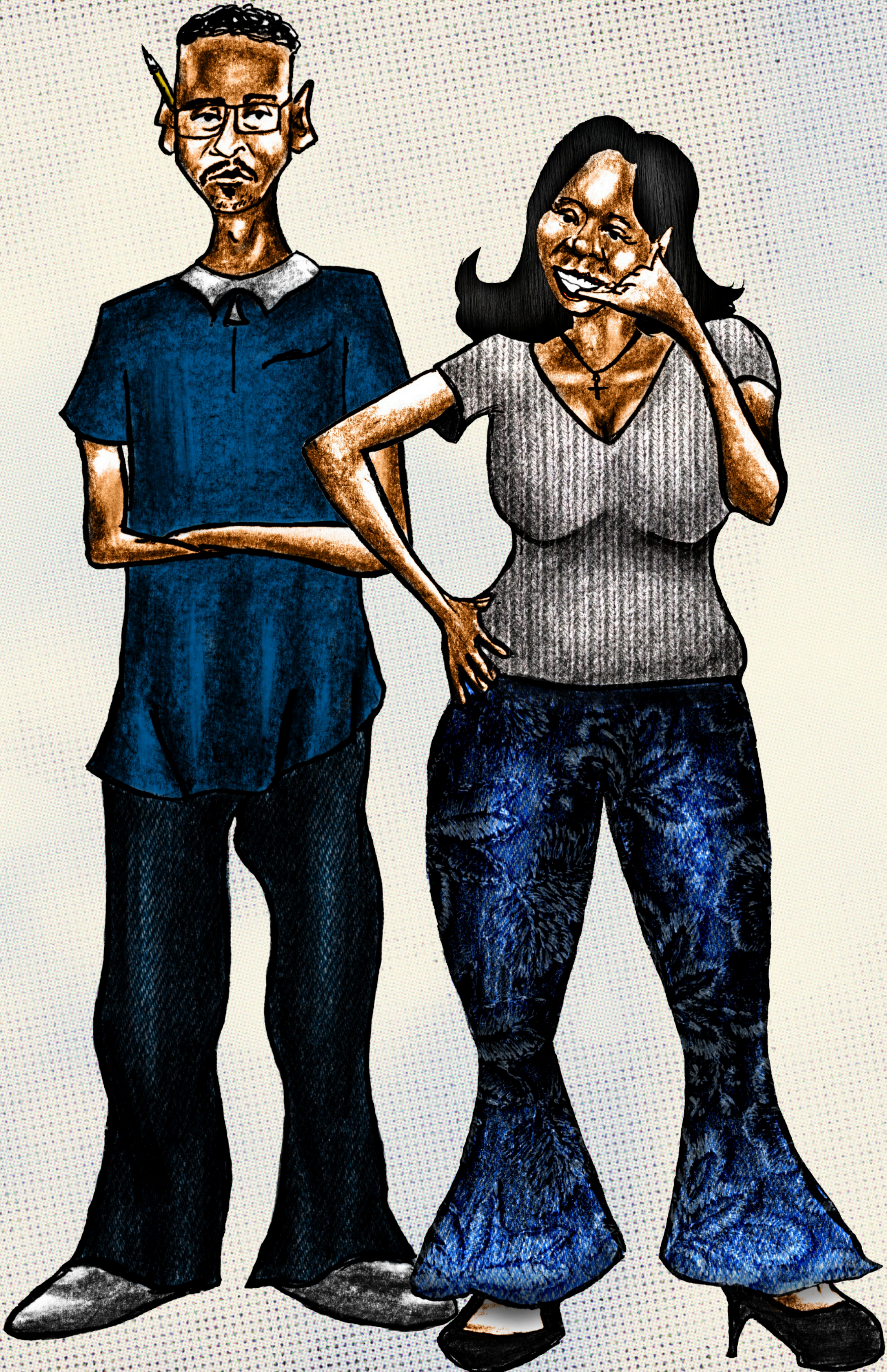
LANGSTON IS THE OLDER BROTHER BY FIVE YEARS. HIS DAD WENT TO JAIL FOR A CRIME HE DIDN'T COMMIT WHEN LANGSTON WAS 2. GROWING UP, HE OFTEN BRAGGED ABOUT HIS DAD'S TIME IN JAIL AND THOUGHT IT MADE HIM LOOK TOUGH. LANGSTON BOUNCED IN AND OUT OF JUVENILE HALL AND ENDED UP SERVING NINE YEARS IN JAIL AT 18 YEARS OLD.

IN JAIL, HE FOUND GOD – AND BY THE TIME HE GOT OUT AT 27, HE WAS READY TO REBUILD.

MO'

DURING A SHORT FURLOUGH, MO' WAS CONCEIVED. BY THE TIME THEIR DAD GOT OUT FOR GOOD, MO' WAS 9. HE WAS OLD ENOUGH TO HAVE A FATHER'S PRESENCE DURING SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT YEARS. HE GREW UP WITH THE STRUCTURE AND GUIDANCE THAT LANGSTON DIDN'T GET.

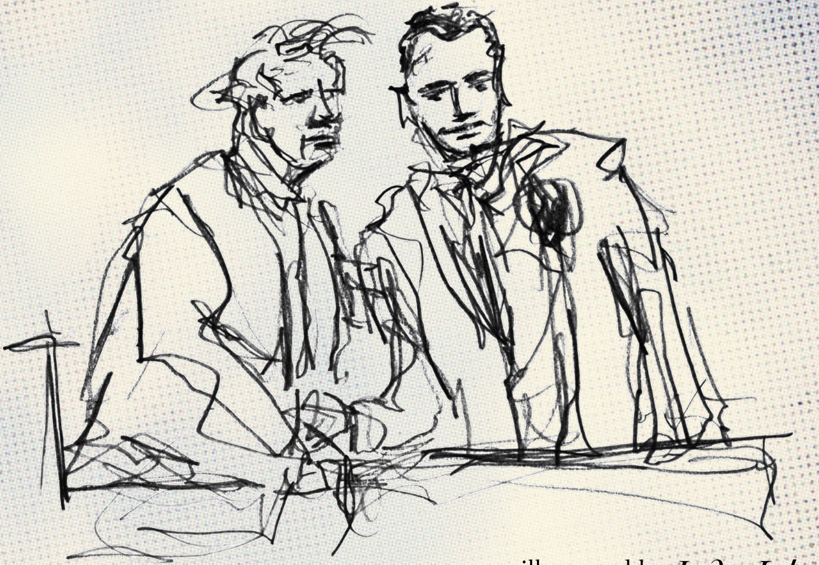




LANGSTON SR. & PATSY

PATSY KEPT THE HOUSEHOLD TOGETHER WHILE LANGSTON SR WAS LOCKED UP, BALANCING CARE WITH DISCIPLINE WHILE INSTILLING FAITH AND RESPONSIBILITY. NOW THE BROTHERS LIVE TOGETHER, BUT THE PARENTS ARE JUST A CALL AWAY, SOMETIMES CHECKING IN TO MAKE SURE LANGSTON IS LOOKING AFTER MO'.

FREE SPEECH MY...



illustrated by *Jordan Lyles*

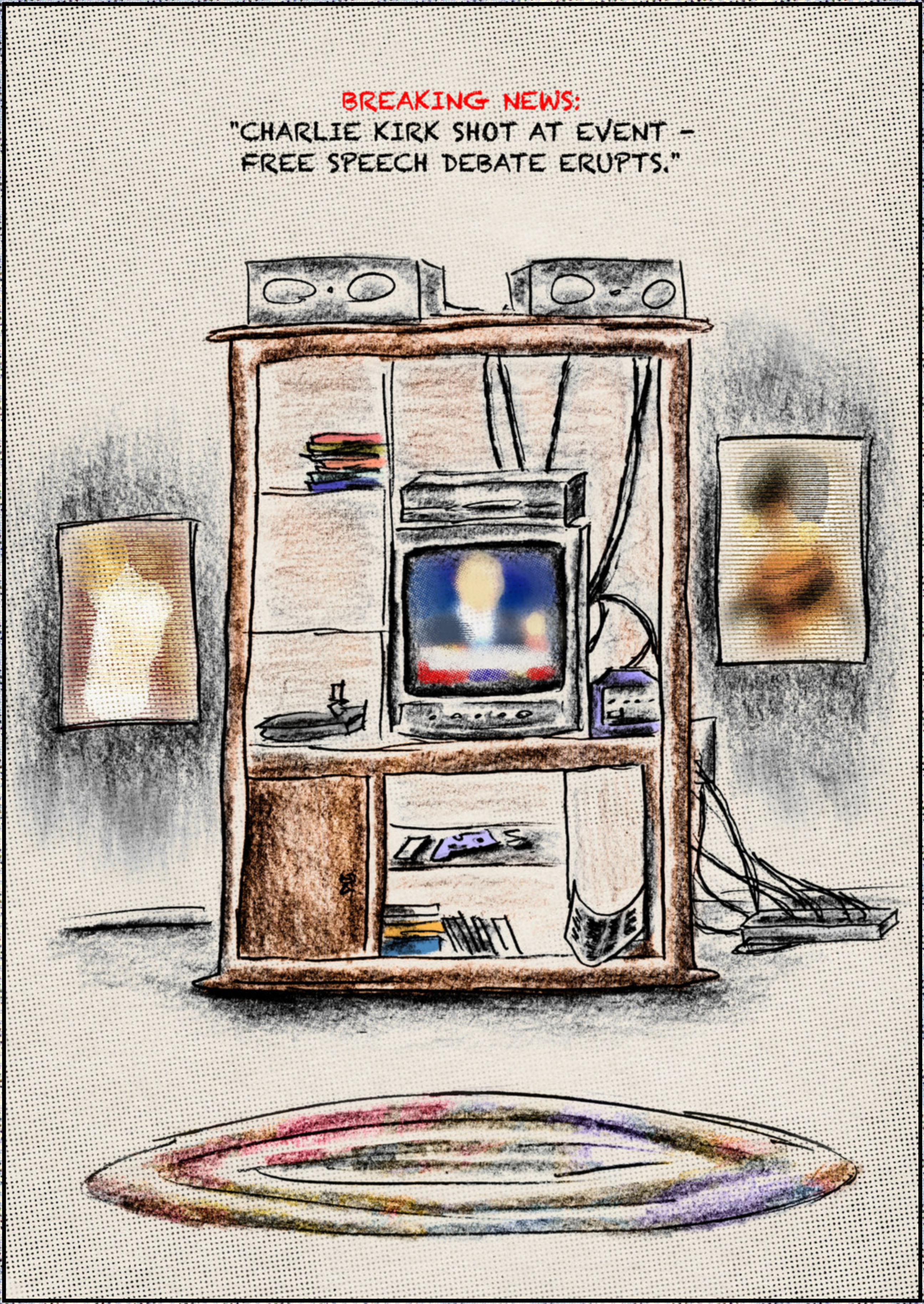
CHARLIE KIRK, FOUNDER OF TURNING POINT USA, WAS KNOWN FOR SAYING THINGS THAT GOT PEOPLE TALKING, LIKE HIS VIEWS ON ISLAM, IMMIGRATION, AND VACCINE RULES. ON SEPTEMBER 10, 2025, HE WAS KILLED DURING A SPEAKING EVENT, AND PEOPLE HAD VERY DIFFERENT REACTIONS.

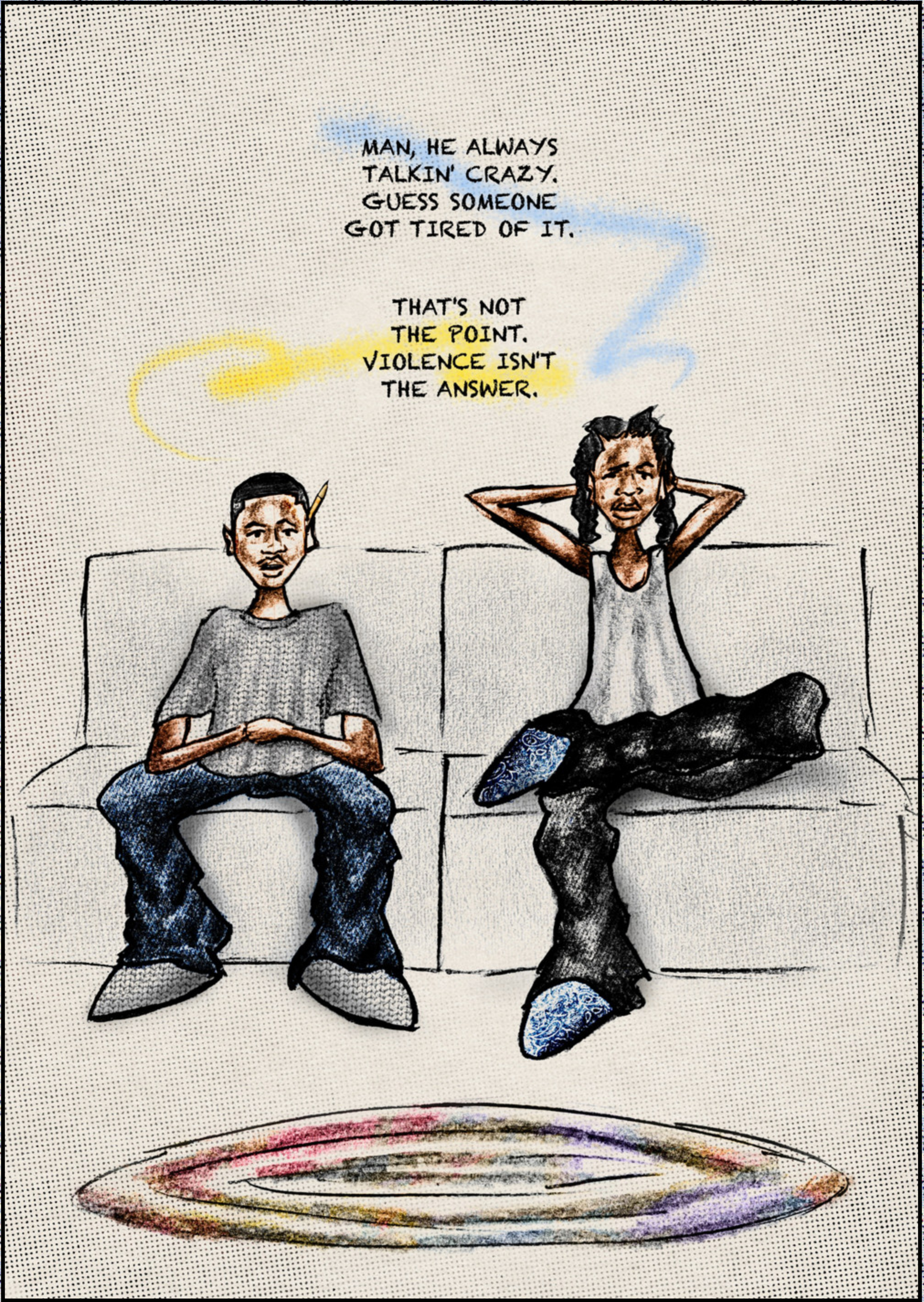
SOME SEE HIM AS A MARTYR, WHICH MEANS A PERSON WHO IS HURT OR KILLED BECAUSE OF THEIR BELIEFS OR WHAT THEY STAND FOR. THEY FEEL HE WAS TARGETED FOR SPEAKING HIS MIND. OTHERS THINK HIS WORDS WERE OFTEN CONTROVERSIAL, AND WHILE HIS DEATH IS TRAGIC, IT WAS CONNECTED TO THE ENVIRONMENT HIS SPEECH HELPED CREATE.

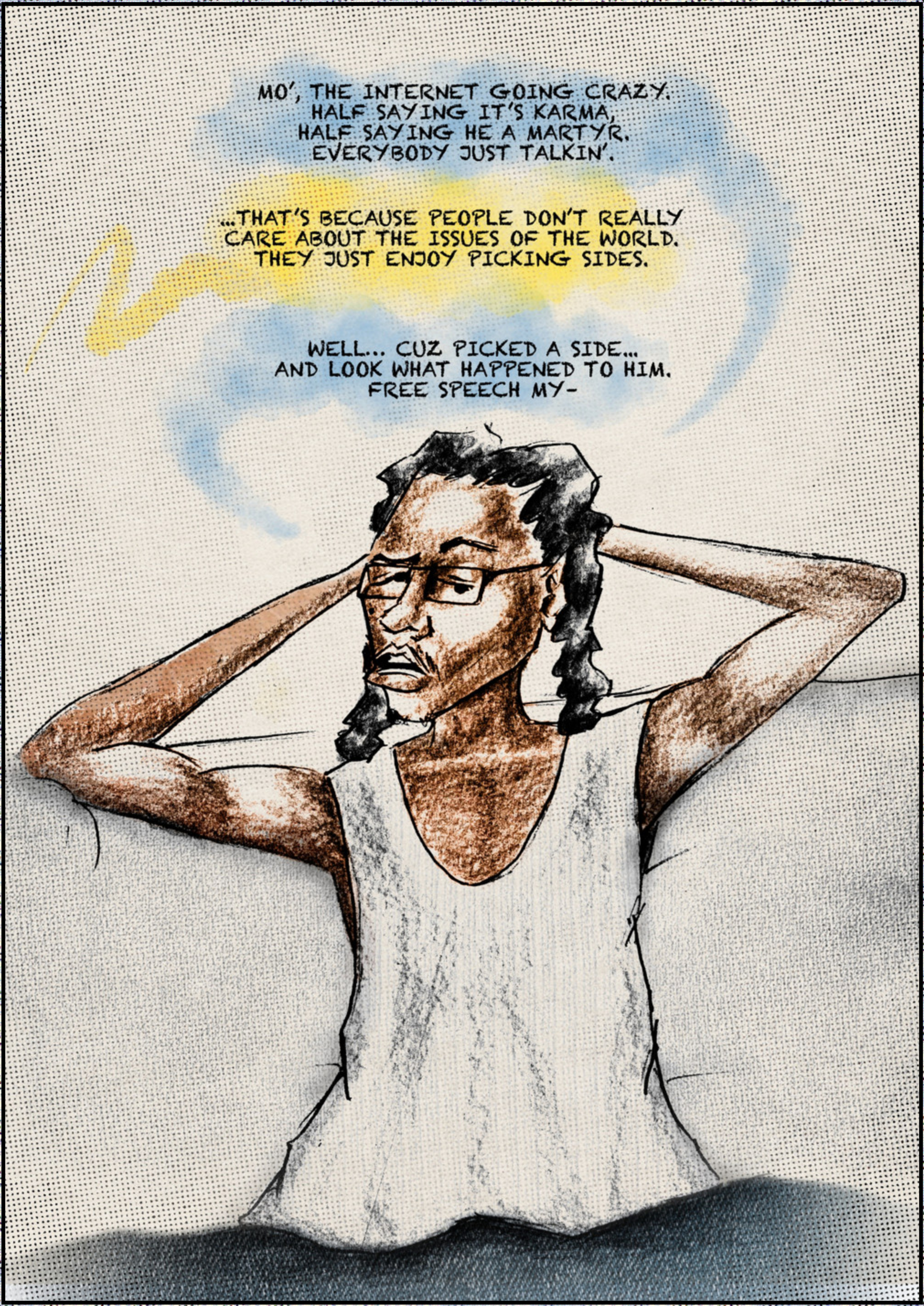
KIRK'S DEATH IS A REMINDER THAT VIOLENCE HAS BEEN USED TO SILENCE PEOPLE WITH PLATFORMS BEFORE. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR., A LEADER FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND RACIAL EQUALITY, WAS ASSASSINATED FOR HIS ACTIVISM. JOHN F. KENNEDY, U.S. PRESIDENT, WAS KILLED WHILE LEADING THE COUNTRY THROUGH MAJOR POLITICAL CHANGE. MALCOLM X, A CIVIL RIGHTS AND BLACK NATIONALIST ACTIVIST, WAS ASSASSINATED FOR SPEAKING OUT AGAINST RACIAL INJUSTICE. YITZHAK RABIN, ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER, WAS KILLED FOR WORKING TOWARD PEACE. THESE PEOPLE WERE ATTACKED BECAUSE OF THE MESSAGES THEY SHARED AND THE CHANGES THEY WERE TRYING TO MAKE.

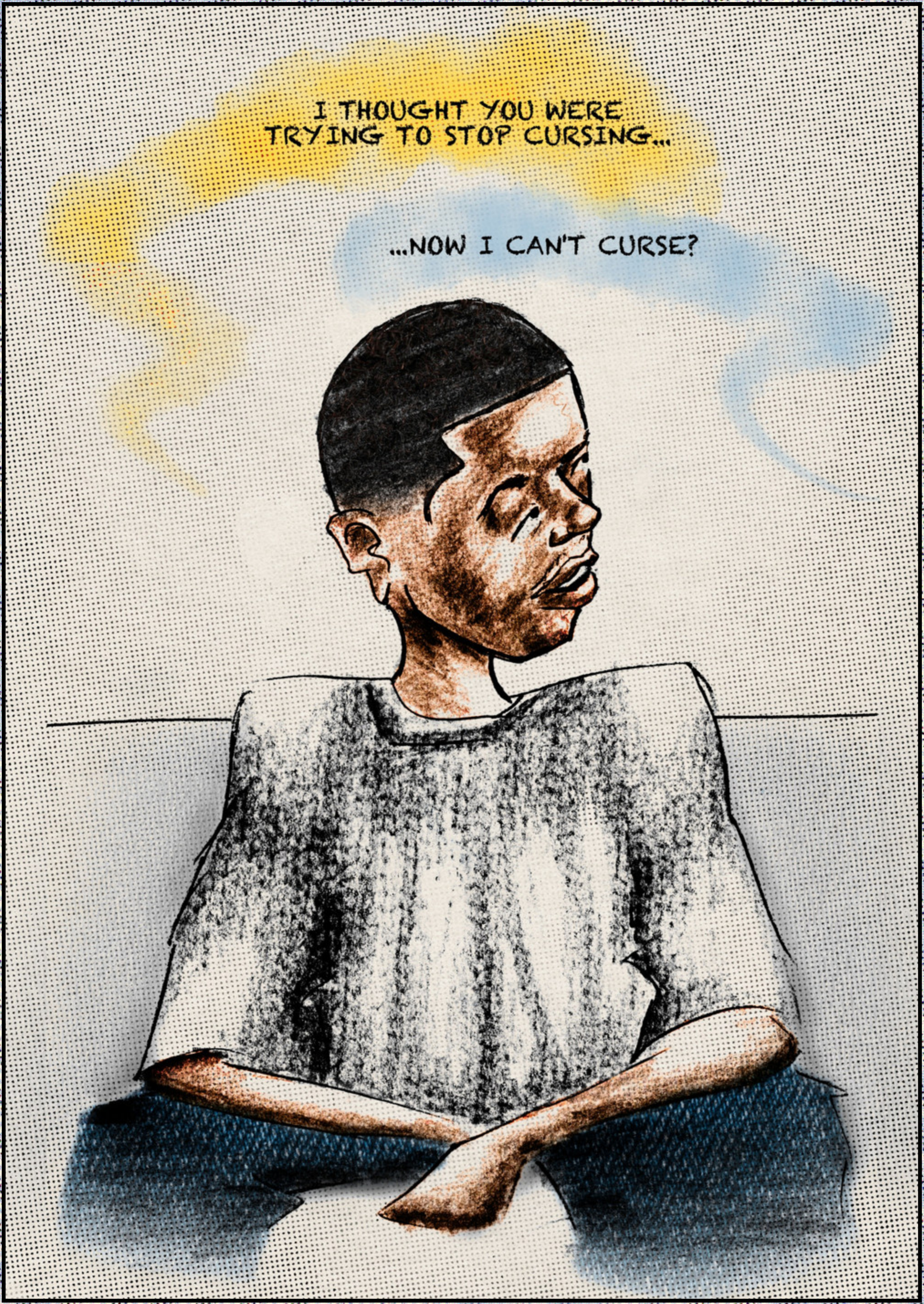
THE REACTION AFTER KIRK'S DEATH ALSO RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE SPEECH. SOME STUDENTS AND TEACHERS FACED CONSEQUENCES FOR WHAT THEY SAID ONLINE ABOUT THE INCIDENT, SHOWING HOW COMPLICATED IT CAN BE WHEN WORDS, OPINIONS, AND REACTIONS COLLIDE. THIS STORY HIGHLIGHTS A BALANCE EVERYONE HAS TO THINK ABOUT: YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SPEAK YOUR MIND, BUT YOUR WORDS HAVE POWER, AND THE WAY PEOPLE RESPOND CAN BE SERIOUS AND SOMETIMES UNPREDICTABLE.

WHETHER WE AGREE WITH THEIR MESSAGES OR NOT, THEIR DEATHS MAKE YOU STOP AND THINK ABOUT WHAT FREEDOM OF SPEECH REALLY MEANS AND THE RISKS THAT COME WITH USING YOUR VOICE. AND IN THE STUDIO, THAT SAME PRINCIPLE APPLIES. THE MUSIC YOU RECORD, THE LYRICS YOU WRITE, THE SOUNDS YOU CREATE; THEY CARRY MESSAGES, INFLUENCE PEOPLE, AND CAN EVEN SPARK PEACE OR VIOLENCE. FREEDOM OF SPEECH ISN'T JUST ABOUT WORDS; IT'S ABOUT THE IMPACT OF WHAT YOU PUT OUT INTO THE WORLD.


BREAKING NEWS:
"CHARLIE KIRK SHOT AT EVENT – FREE SPEECH DEBATE ERUPTS."

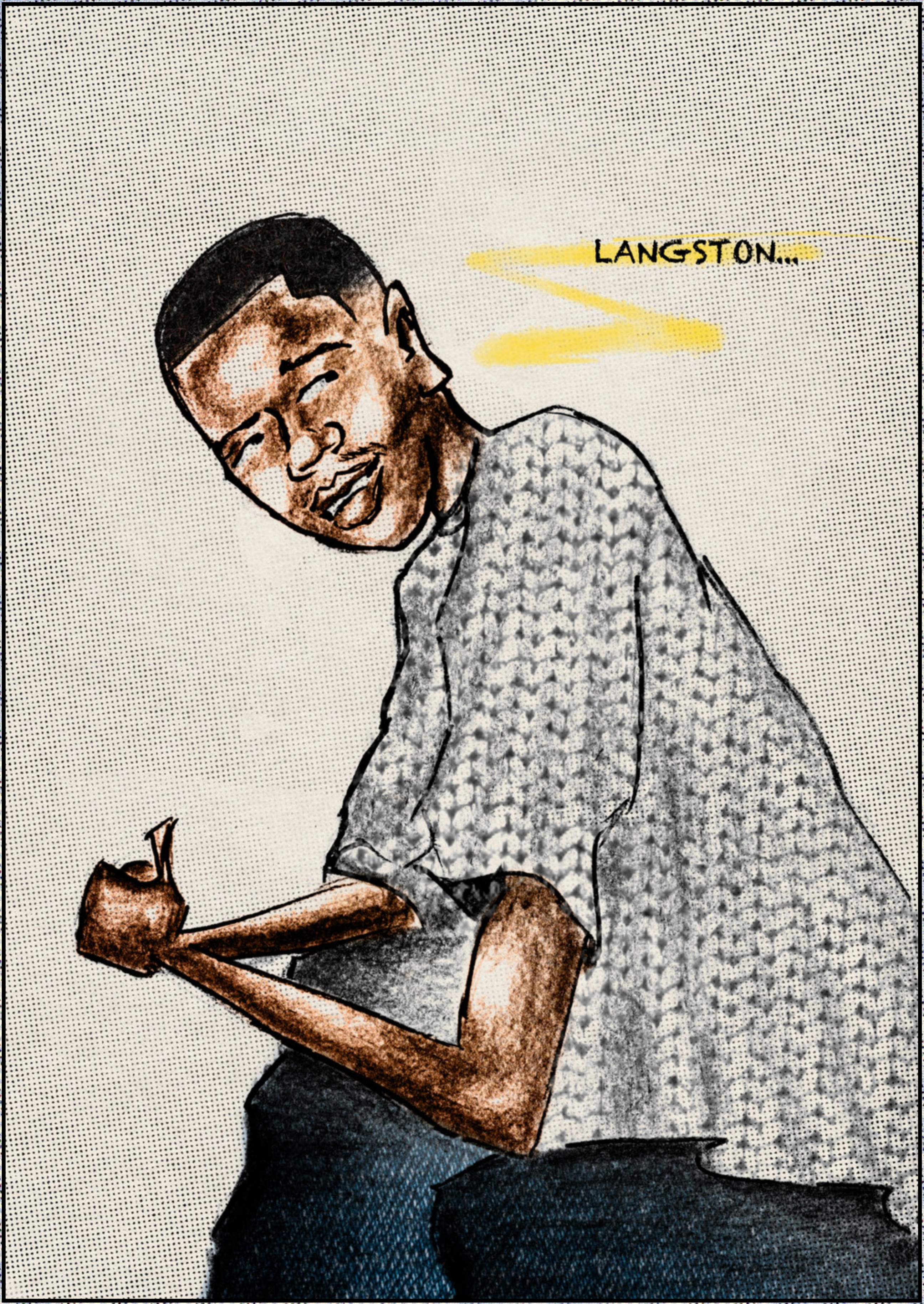

MAN, HE ALWAYS TALKIN' CRAZY. GUESS SOMEONE GOT TIRED OF IT.
THAT'S NOT THE POINT. VIOLENCE ISN'T THE ANSWER.

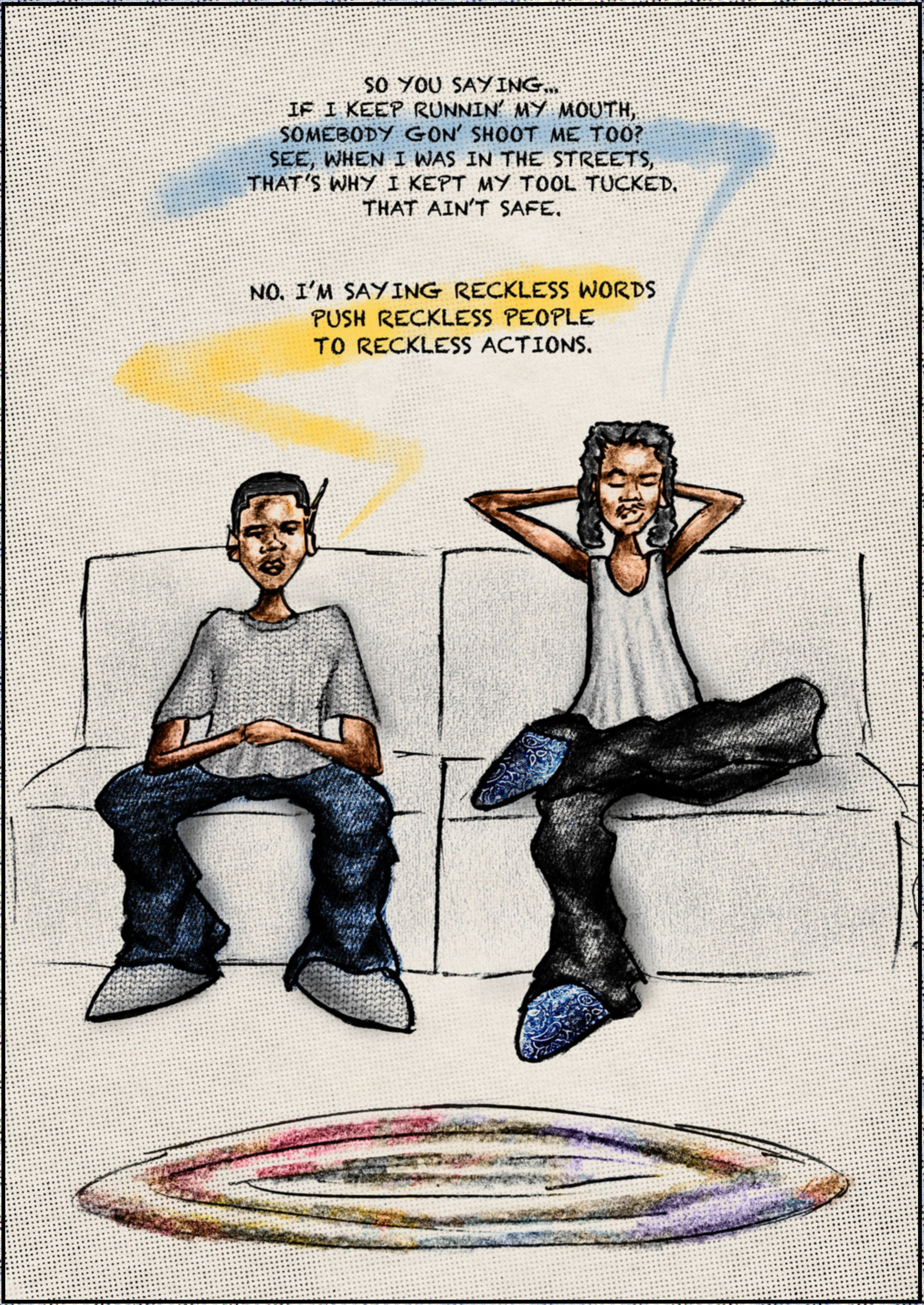

MO', THE INTERNET GOING CRAZY. HALF SAYING IT'S KARMA, HALF SAYING HE A MARTYR. EVERYBODY JUST TALKIN'.
...THAT'S BECAUSE PEOPLE DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT THE ISSUES OF THE WORLD. THEY JUST ENJOY PICKING SIDES.
WELL... CUZ PICKED A SIDE... AND LOOK WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM. FREE SPEECH MY-

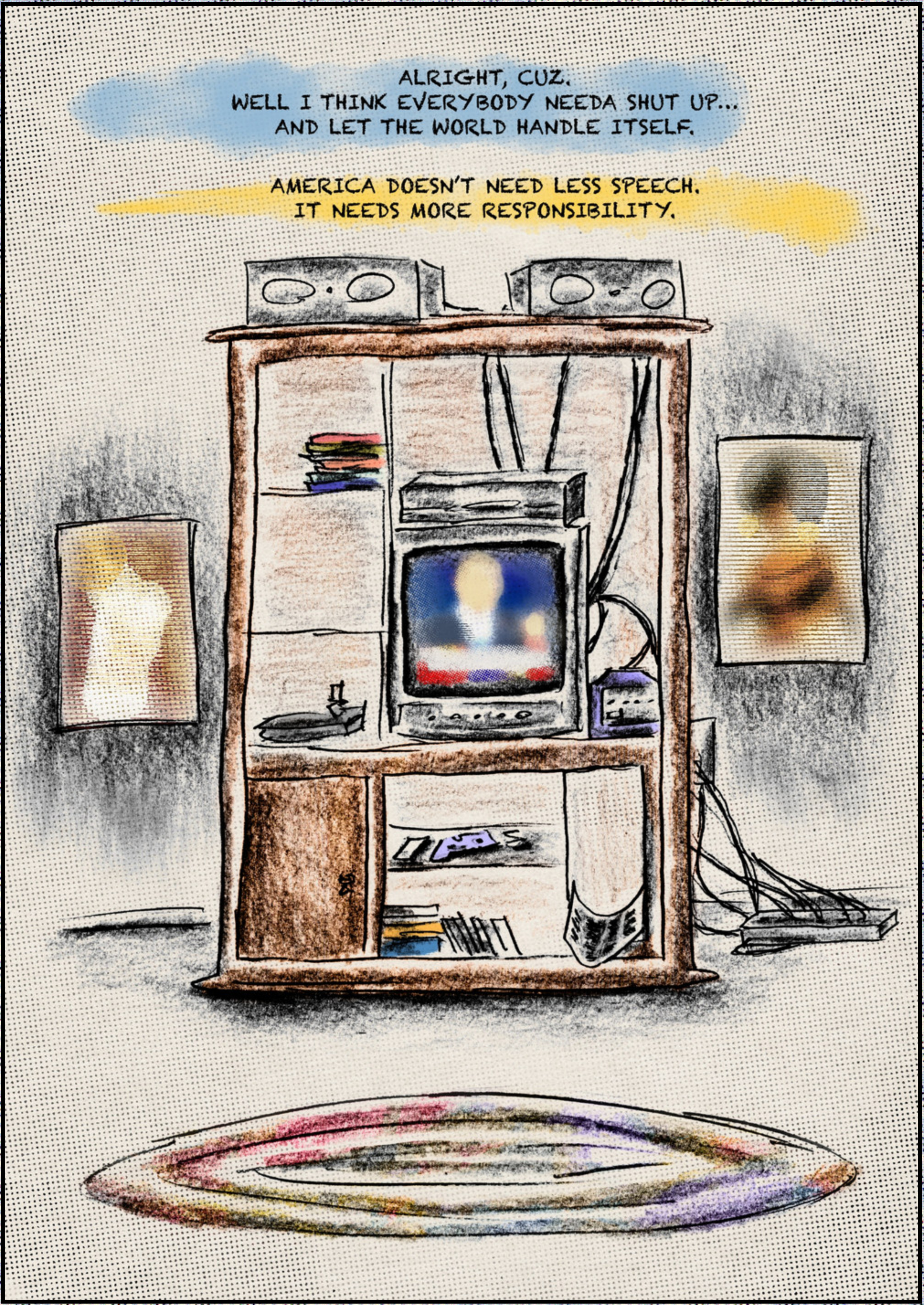

I THOUGHT YOU WERE TRYING TO STOP CURSING...
...NOW I CAN'T CURSE?

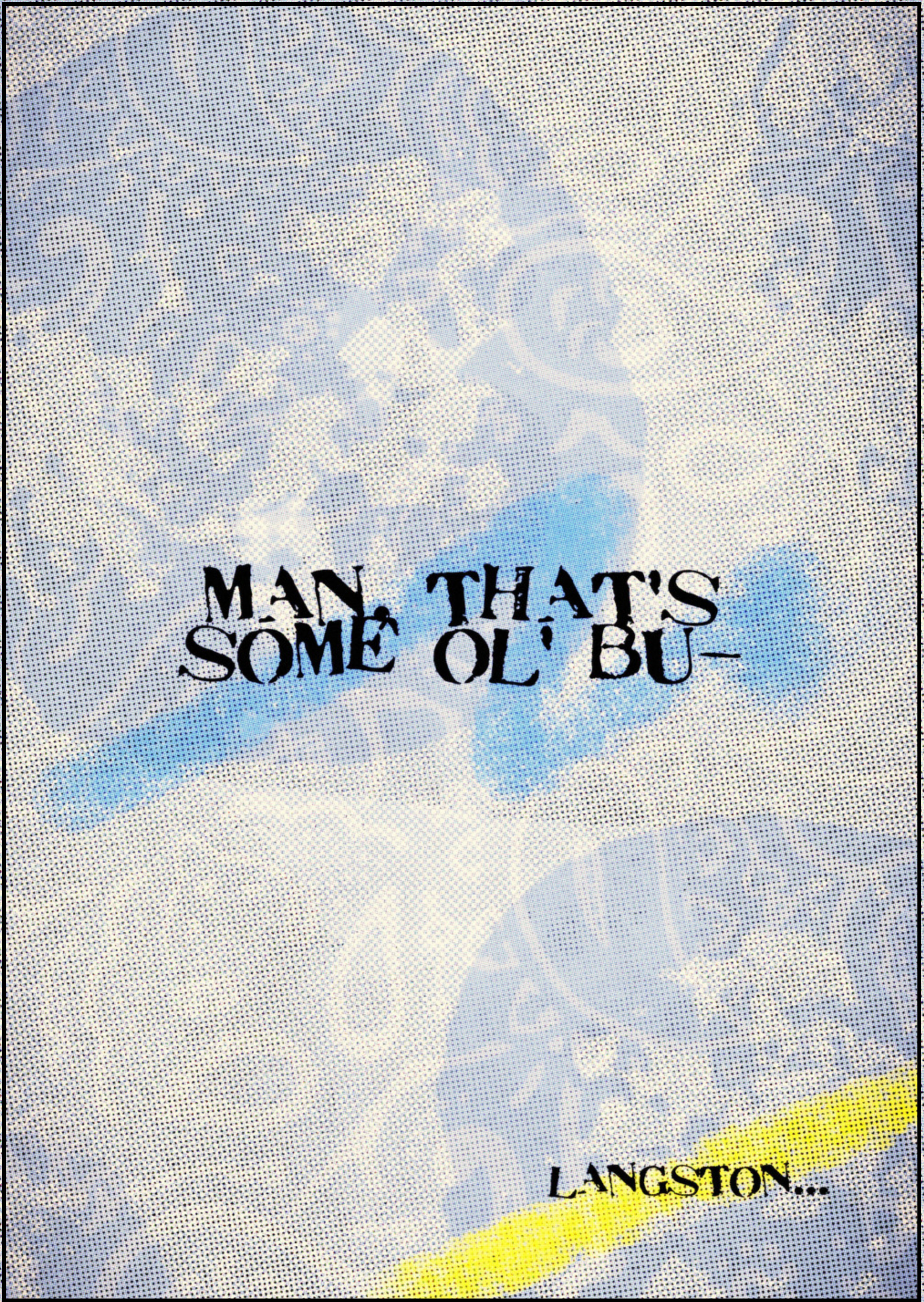
FREE SPEECH MY

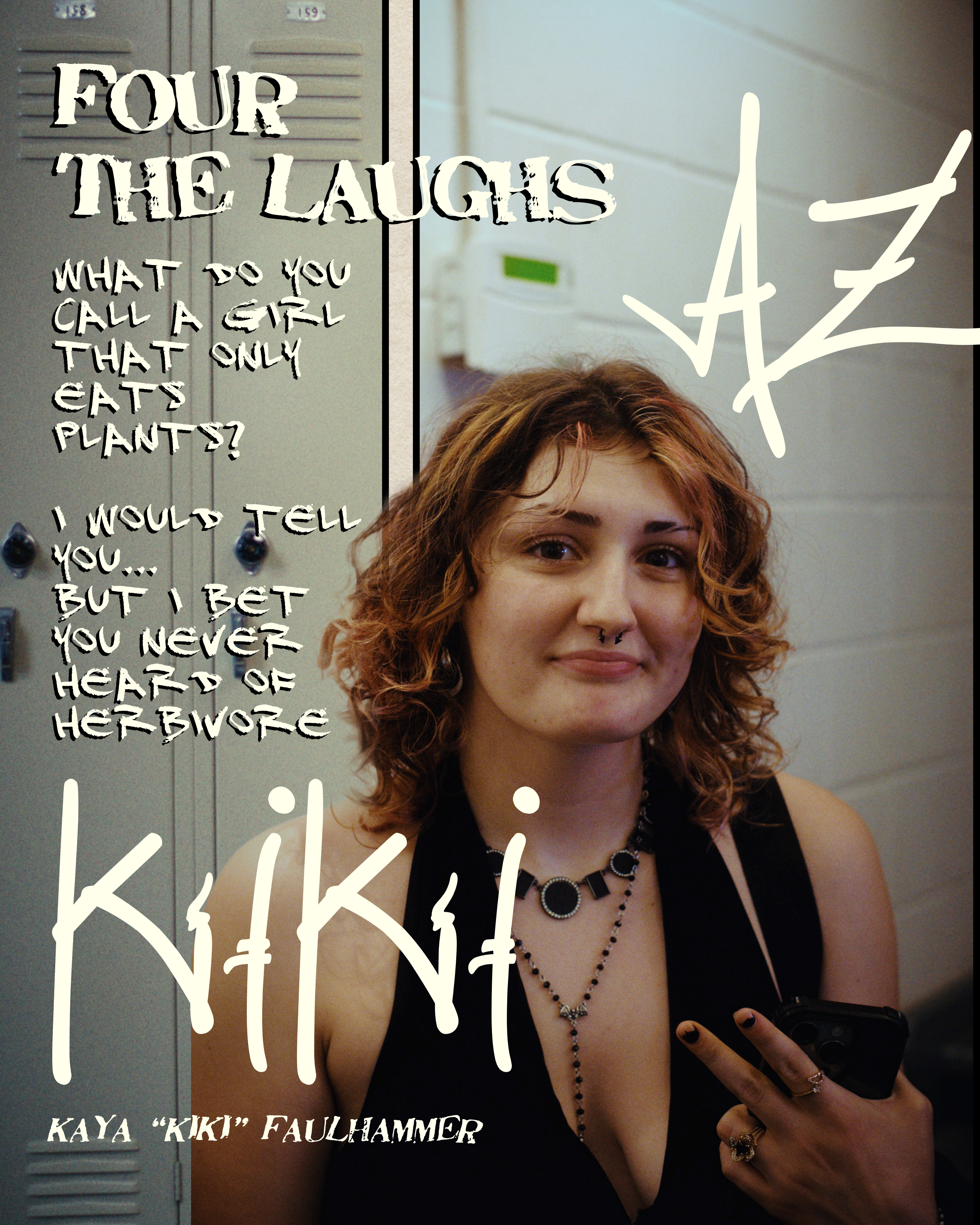
FREE SPEECH MY...


LANGSTON...


SO YOU SAYING...
IF I KEEP RUNNIN' MY MOUTH,
SOMEBODY GON' SHOOT ME TOO?
SEE, WHEN I WAS IN THE STREETS,
THAT'S WHY I KEPT MY TOOL TUCKED.
THAT AIN'T SAFE.
NO. I'M SAYING RECKLESS WORDS
PUSH RECKLESS PEOPLE
TO RECKLESS ACTIONS.


ALRIGHT, CUZ.
WELL I THINK EVERYBODY NEEDA SHUT UP...
AND LET THE WORLD HANDLE ITSELF.
AMERICA DOESN'T NEED LESS SPEECH.
IT NEEDS MORE RESPONSIBILITY.


MAN, THAT'S SOME OL' BU-
LANGSTON...



FOUR THE LAUGHS

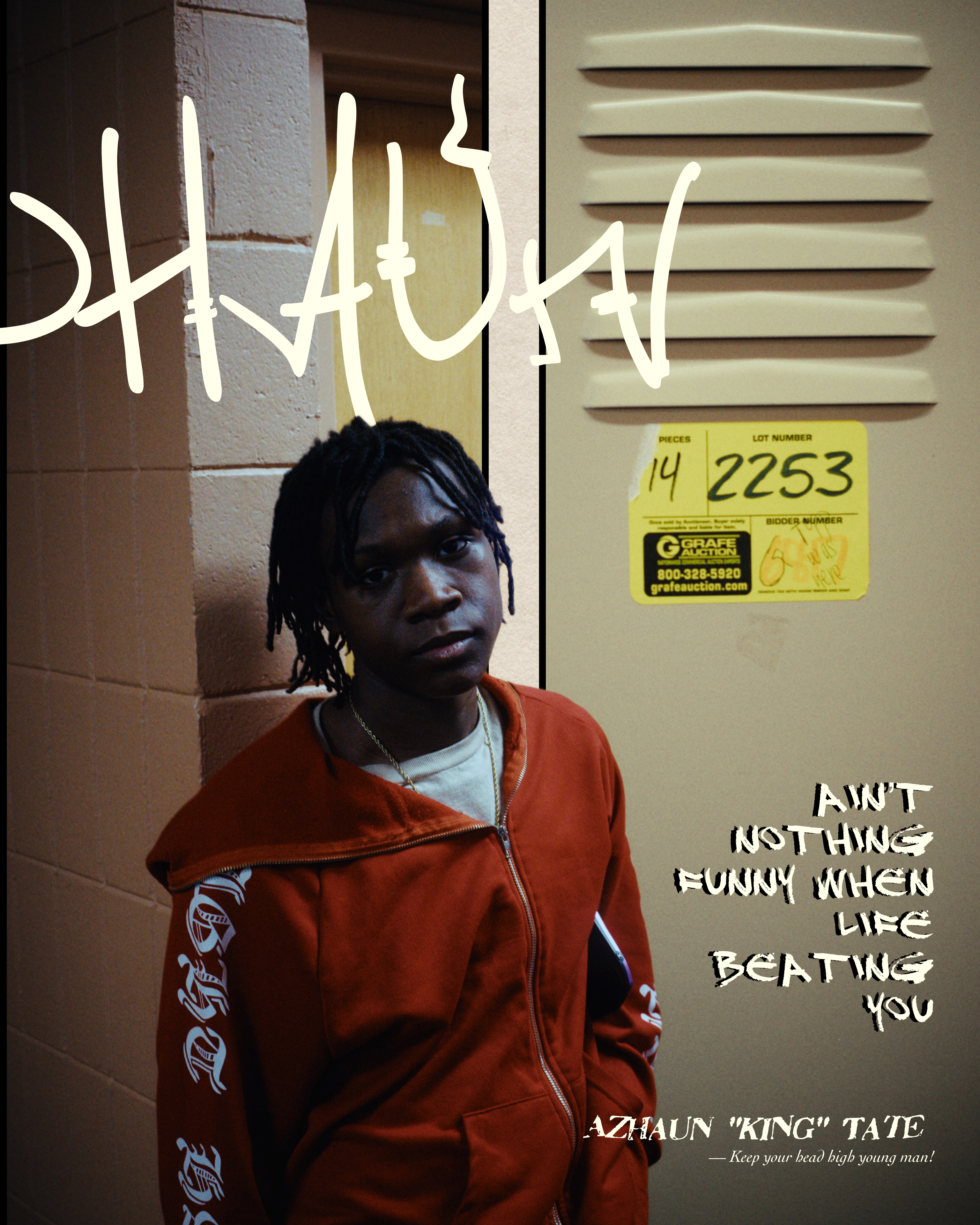
AZ

WHAT DO YOU CALL A GIRL THAT ONLY EATS PLANTS?

I WOULD TELL YOU...
BUT I BET YOU NEVER HEARD OF HERBIVORE

KiKi

KAYA "KIKI" FAULHAMMER


HAUN
PIECES
LOT NUMBER
14
2253
BIDDER NUMBER
GRAFE AUCTION
800-328-5920
grafeauction.com

AIN'T
NOTHING
FUNNY WHEN
LIFE
BEATING
YOU

AZHAUN "KING" TATE

— Keep your head high young man!

KHLOE

KHLOE KRUCHOWSKI

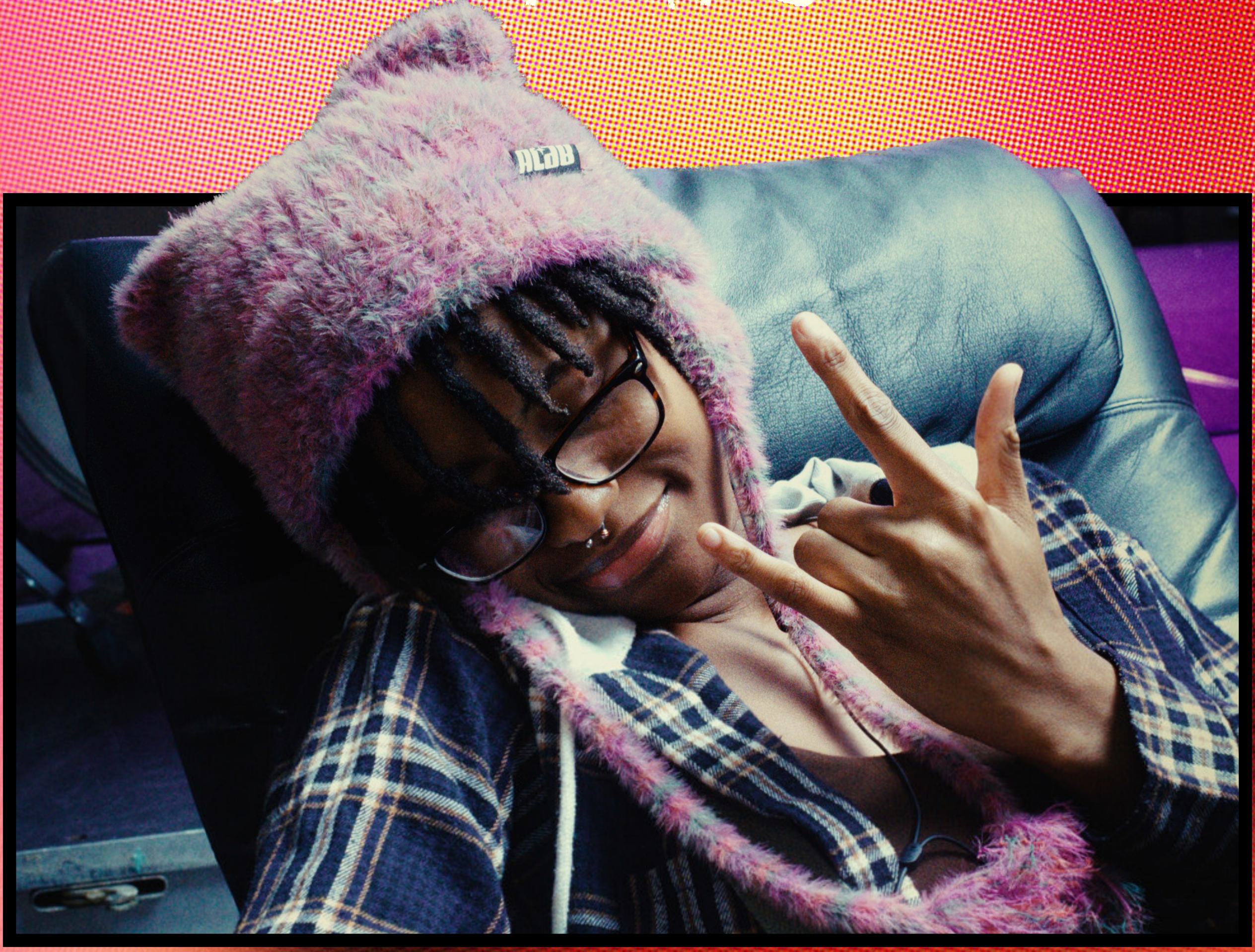
AFTER
WAITING
THREE
DAYS FOR
KHLOE'S
JOKE, SHE
DELIVERED
ONE SHE
THOUGHT
UP IN THE
MIDDLE OF
THE NIGHT
—

"WHY WAS
THE CACTUS
MEAN?

BECAUSE IT
WAS SAR-
CACTUS"

4 WEEKS 1 SONG

WITH DA'ZYIA JONES



FEELS LIKE SUMMER

BY CHILDISH
GAMBINO

JORDAN: WHAT SONG WOULD DEFINE YOUR LIFE THIS PAST AUGUST?

DA'ZYIA: OOO, HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE SONG CALLED 'FEELS LIKE SUMMER'

JORDAN: CHILDISH GAMBINO?

DA'ZYIA: YEAH.

JORDAN: I HAVE. WHY THIS SONG?

DA'ZYIA: I REALLY ENJOY THE MUSIC. I'M NOT SURE, I JUST REALLY LIKE IT.

JORDAN: WHAT COLOR IS THIS SONG TO YOU?

DA'ZYIA: I'LL SAY YELLOW, LIKE A BRIGHT SUN, WITH SOME LITTLE TOUCHES OF SKY BLUE. HONESTLY, I FEEL LIKE THE SKY IS MY COLOR.

JORDAN: WHERE DID YOU FIRST HEAR THIS SONG?

DA'ZYIA: FROM MY FRIENDS. WE HEARD IT IN THE CAR WHEN SUMMER WAS BEGINNING. IT WAS A REALLY NICE VIBE, AND IT STARTED TO BECOME MY FAVORITE.

JORDAN: BEGINNING OF WHAT SUMMER?

DA'ZYIA: THIS SUMMER.

JORDAN: NICE. ALL RIGHT, ONE MORE QUESTION, IF IT SNOWED DURING THE SUMMER, WOULD IT STILL FEEL LIKE SUMMER?

DA'ZYIA: [LAUGHS] NO, IT WOULD NOT FEEL LIKE SUMMER.

JORDAN: ALL RIGHT, COOL. THANK YOU SO MUCH [LAUGHS + HIGH FIVE]

DA'ZYIA: THANK YOU [LAUGHS]

– Four Fingers, Issue of October 2025

INTRODUCING

TRUE CONFESSIONS

FEATURING SHAN KASONGOMA

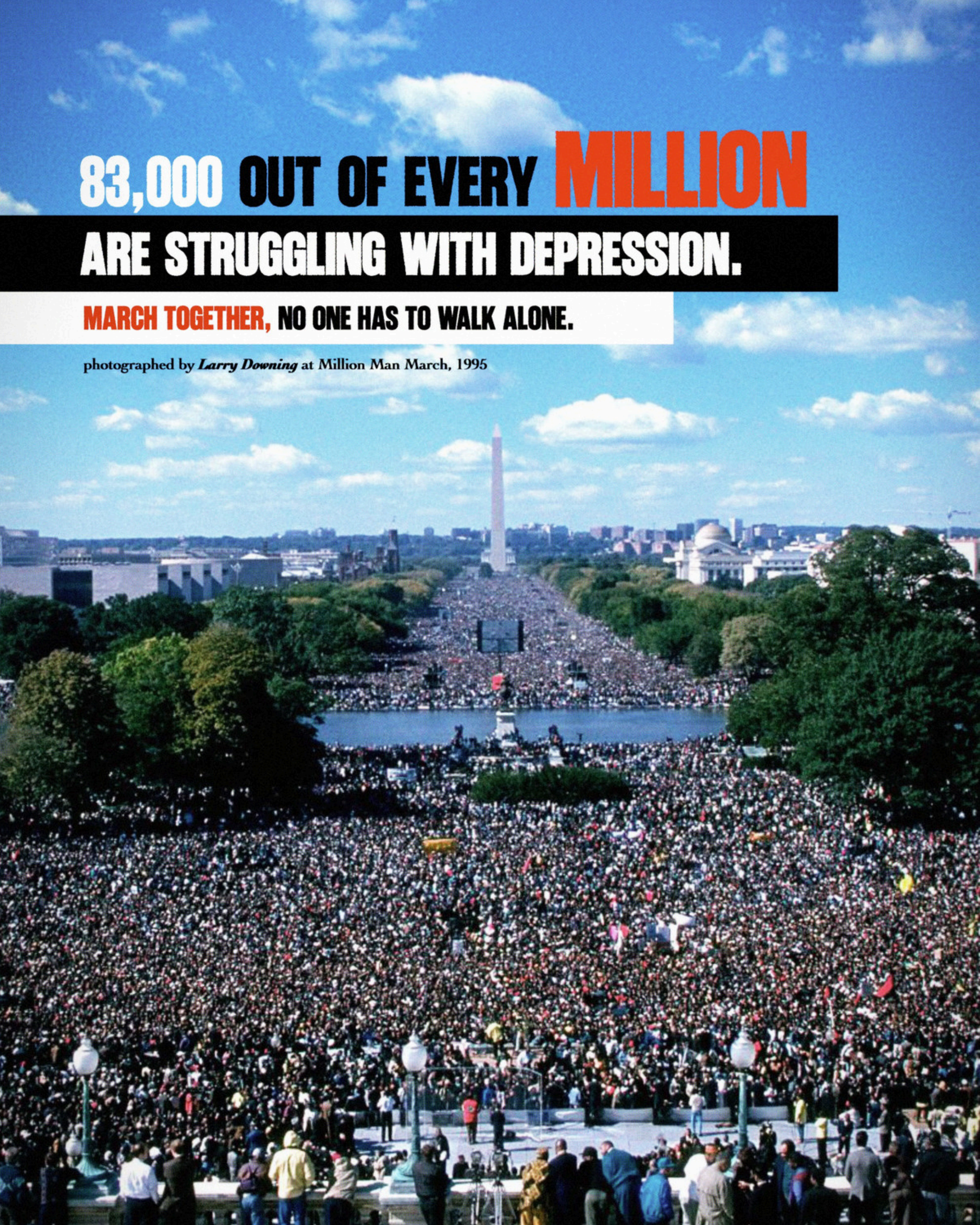
WHAT IS A SONG YOU ENJOY
BUT WOULDN'T PLAY IN FRONT
OF YOUR HOMIES?

FIREWORK

BY

KATY PERRY

THRASHER


83,000 OUT OF EVERY MILLION
ARE STRUGGLING WITH DEPRESSION.
MARCH TOGETHER, NO ONE HAS TO WALK ALONE.

photographed by ***Larry Downing*** at Million Man March, 1995

CALL 988

SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE AVAILABLE 24 HOURS A DAY 7 DAYS A WEEK

There are moments in life when a single gesture, a few kind words, or even the presence of another person can make a difference far deeper than we realize. I sometimes hate how cliche that sounds because the weight of it doesn't come across strong enough to the reader. Many people go through their days carrying quiet pain, burdened by thoughts they never speak aloud. We often forget how invisible struggles can be. Someone can look fine, smile at the right moments, do their work, show up for others, and still feel completely alone. Suicide prevention is not always about grand interventions or knowing exactly the right thing to say. Sometimes it begins with being aware that people around us may be fighting battles we cannot see.

Everyday interactions that seem small can mean more than we know. Our smile might be the only warmth someone receives that day. A simple "How are you, really" may be the only moment where someone feels noticed. The kindness we show without thinking could interrupt a dangerous thought pattern for someone who feels hopeless or disconnected. We as people tend to underestimate how powerful human connection can be, especially when someone is struggling silently. Feeling seen, even for a moment, can be enough to remind a person that they matter.

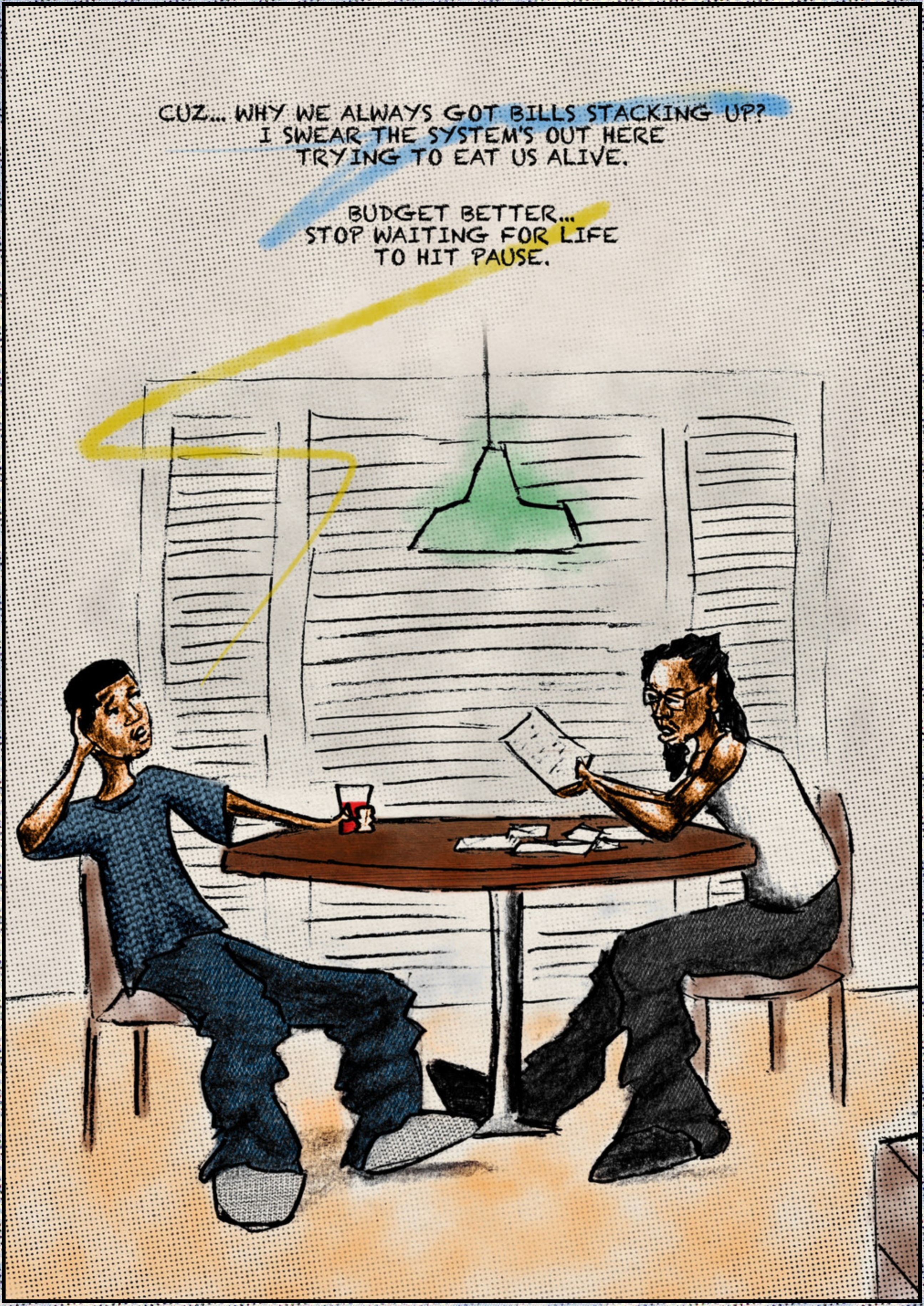
There are people who spend their days convincing themselves that the world would not miss them. They might believe they are a burden or that their absence would relieve others. These thoughts can appear gradually, shaped by stress, isolation, loss, trauma, or exhaustion. When someone reaches that point, they often do not want to die as much as they want the pain to stop. Being present for someone, listening without judgment, or simply showing them that they are valued can interrupt those spirals. You do not need to solve their problems to give them strength. Sometimes showing up is the thing that keeps someone present when they feel like they want to disappear.

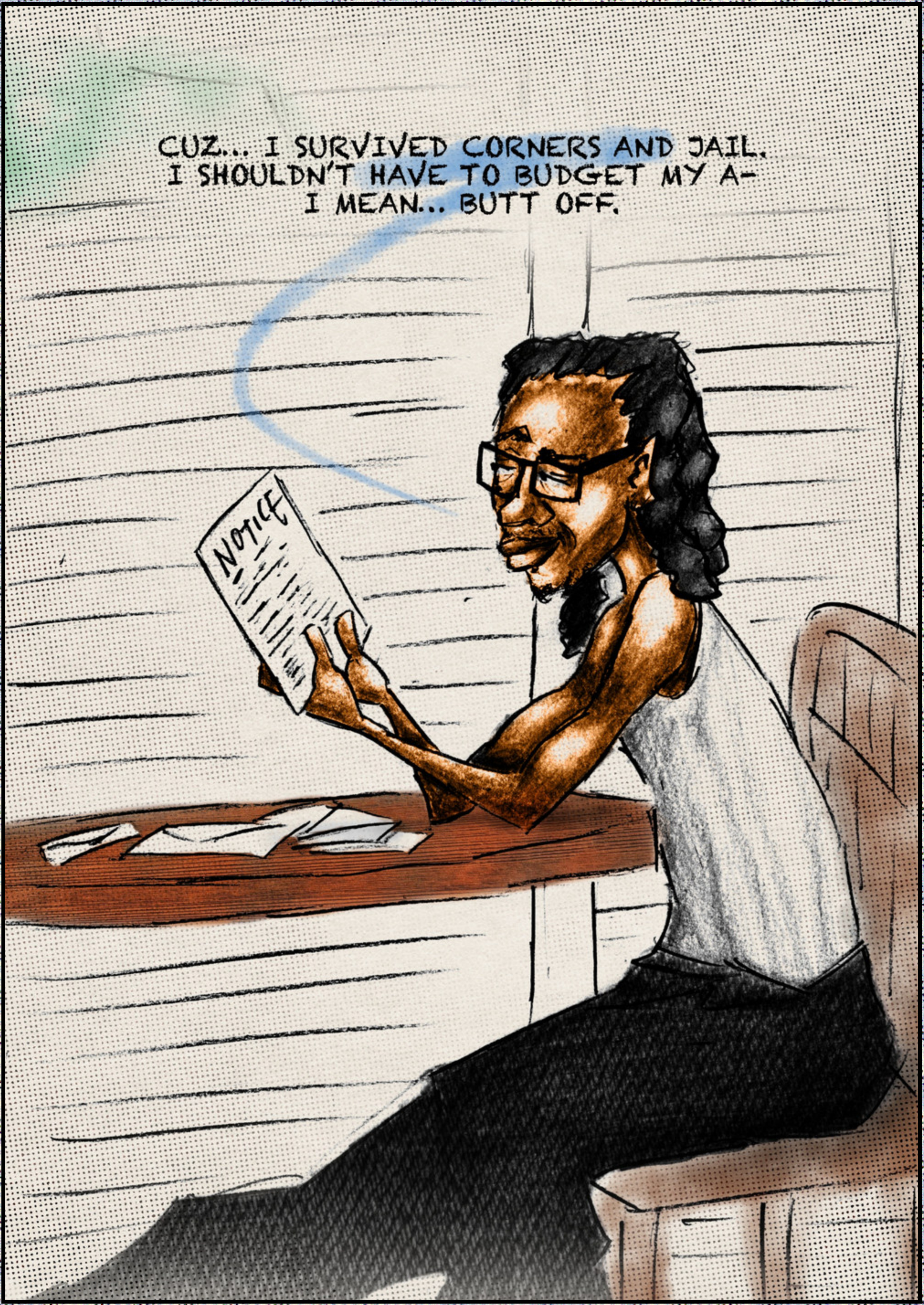
It's important to understand that people rarely ask for help in the ways we expect. Some people hint at their pain through jokes, some withdraw, some overcompensate, and some hide every sign because they do not want to worry anyone. That is why small gestures carry so much weight. You never know who is holding themselves together by a thread. Reaching out to someone who crossed your mind, checking on a friend you have not heard from in a while, or simply being gentle with strangers can shift the direction of someone's day, and sometimes their life.

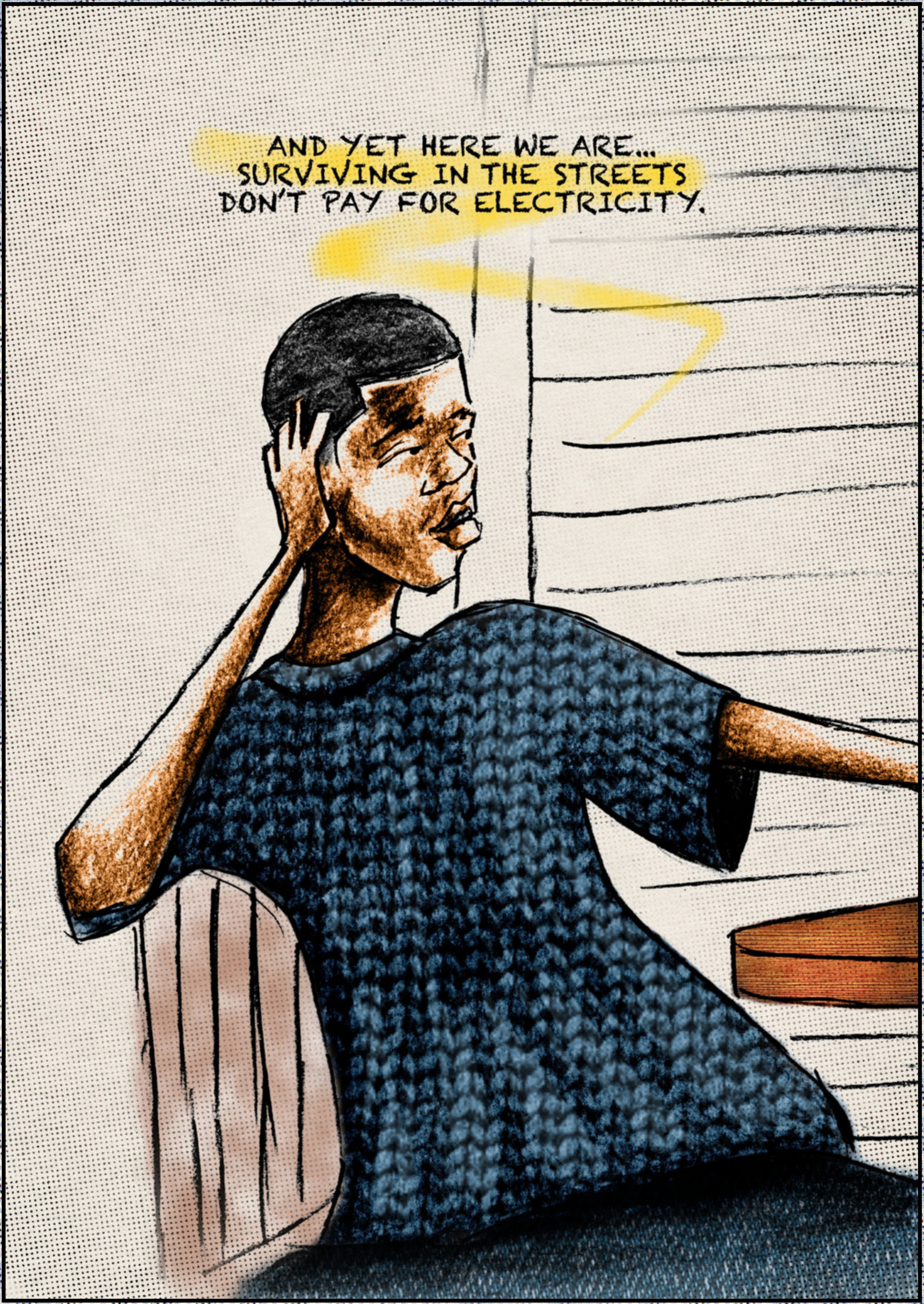
In my life, I've been ignored by many people when speaking; I speak to strangers and they often walk by me without saying a word. Sometimes people will even get irritated that you're trying to acknowledge them, but I learned slowly but surely, that's something deep rooted, not personal. Out of frustration, I'd make a mental decision to *stop speaking to people unless spoken to*; but that's not the heart to walk with. I can't pull myself to be a bystander. If we see someone, we should acknowledge them, if someone's sad, we should try to cheer them up; at the end of the day you just don't know. There have been moments where people have appeared smug or unapproachable, but when their presence is acknowledged, you sometimes see a smile go across their face that says '*Wow, I can't believe someone acknowledged me.*' And they turn out to be the sweetest people.

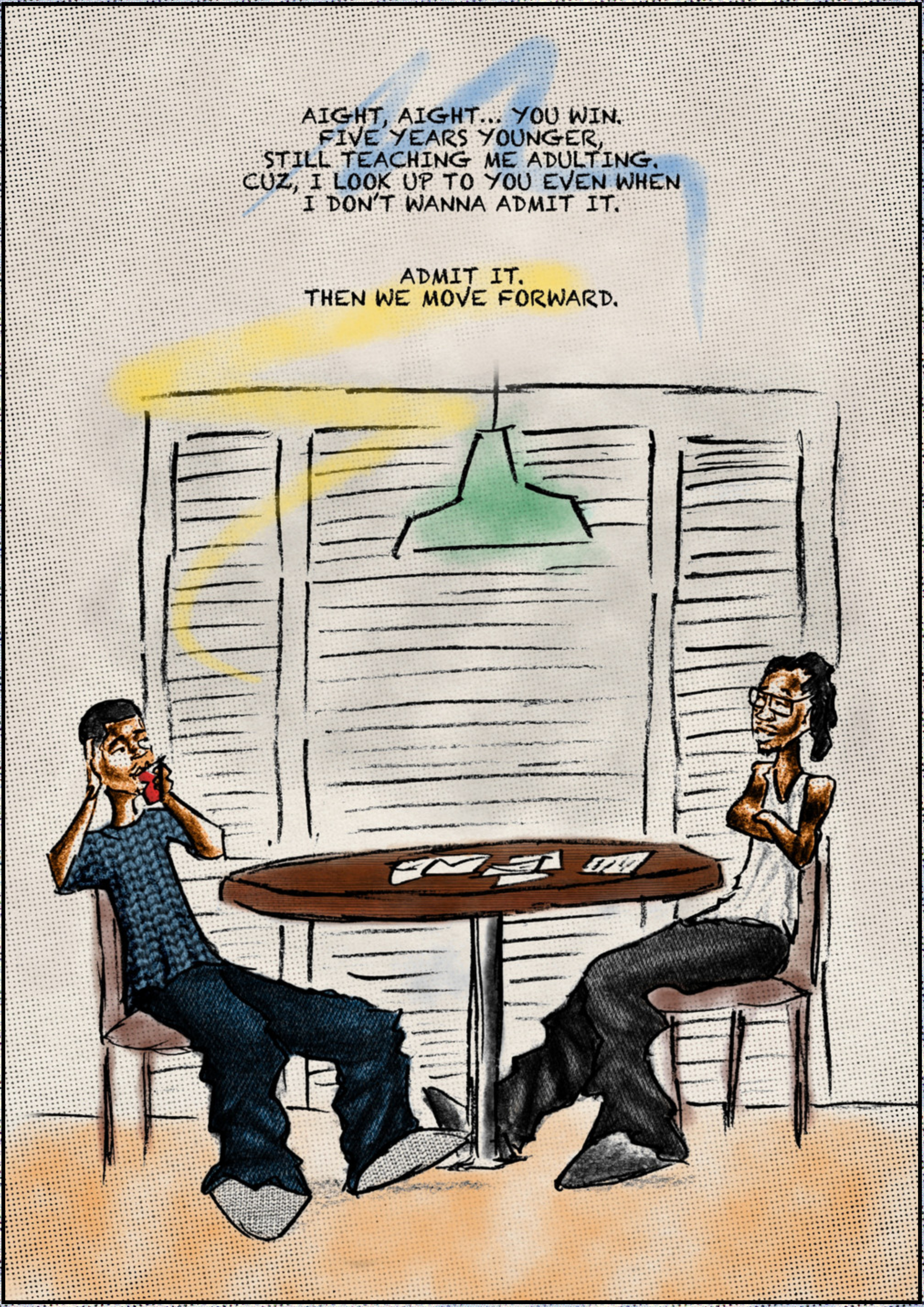
Being the difference does not require training or expertise. It requires noticing. It requires letting people know they are worth caring about. It requires offering compassion even when you do not know what someone is going through. A smile, a kind tone, patience, a little extra understanding, or letting someone talk without rushing them can give a person enough light to get through a dark moment.

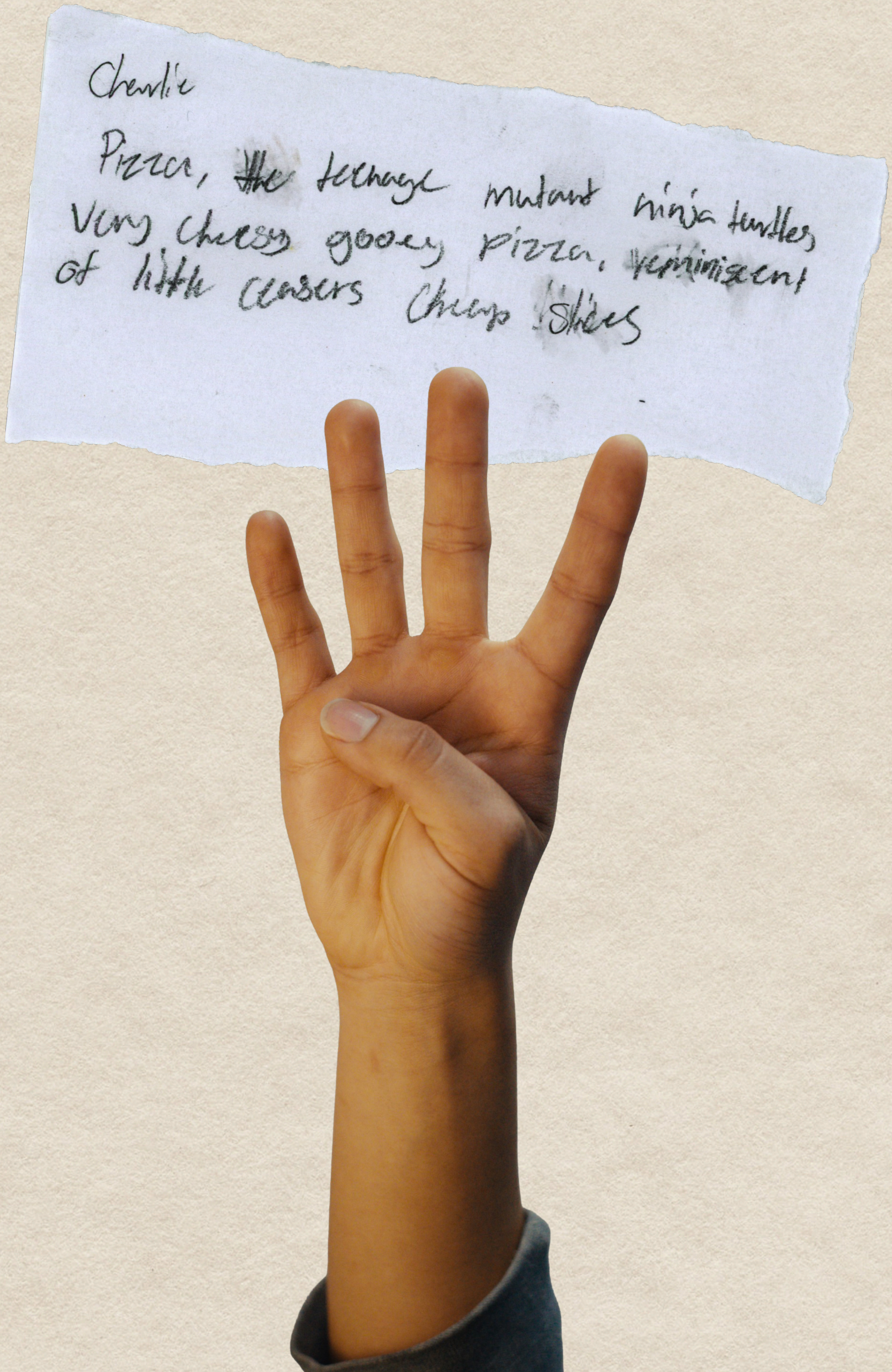
Suicide prevention is not only for professionals or crisis lines, though those resources are essential. It also belongs to everyday people who cross paths with someone in pain. We all have the ability to influence the world around us in small but meaningful ways.


CUZ... WHY WE ALWAYS GOT BILLS STACKING UP? I SWEAR THE SYSTEM'S OUT HERE TRYING TO EAT US ALIVE.
BUDGET BETTER... STOP WAITING FOR LIFE TO HIT PAUSE.


CUZ... I SURVIVED CORNERS AND JAIL.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO BUDGET MY A-
I MEAN... BUTT OFF.
NOTICE

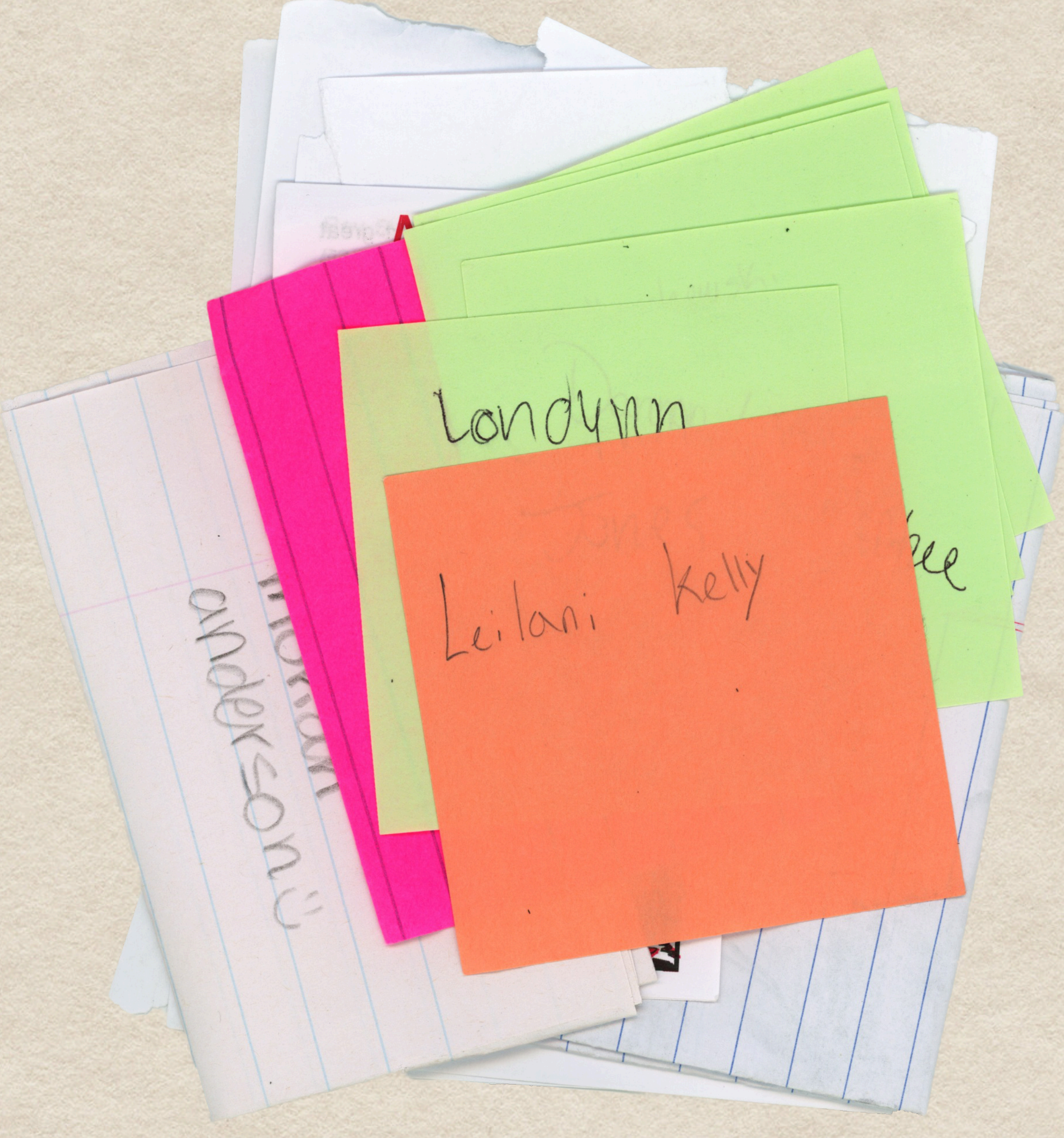

AND YET HERE WE ARE...
SURVIVING IN THE STREETS
DON'T PAY FOR ELECTRICITY.


AIGHT, AIGHT... YOU WIN. FIVE YEARS YOUNGER, STILL TEACHING ME ADULTING. CUZ, I LOOK UP TO YOU EVEN WHEN I DON'T WANNA ADMIT IT.
ADMIT IT. THEN WE MOVE FORWARD.



Charlie

Pizza, ~~the~~ teenage mutant ninja turtles Very Cheesy gooey pizza. reminiscent of little ceasers Cheap !Slices


Londynn
Leilani Kelly
anderson :)

THE ONE THING WE ALL HAVE IN COMMON IS TIME.

In Loving Memory, Jellybean Johnson

While I was down in Minnesota, TC had just picked me up from the studio; where I'd fallen asleep from a case of 'The Itis'. I had just walked across the street to get some Popeyes; a 4 piece. Drumstick, wing, thigh, and breast, 3 biscuits, and a side of red beans and rice. I was sleep like a baby on the studio couch. "Big Dog! CeCe made your favorite meal.", TC said as he walked in the studio and woke me up. We drove back to his home, where CeCe welcomed us with a warm home cooked meal; salmon as the centerpiece. With what little space I had left in my stomach, I ate my favorite meal. We sat together for a while, sharing conversation, laughter, and watched a little TV before seeing TC's daughter off to bed.

Jelly Belly

Later that night, as we got back into the car for him to take me to the studio, everything shifted. TC's phone rang. On the other end was the news that **Jellybean Johnson** of ***The Time*** had passed away.

For a moment, he was lost for words. Shortly after, another call came in from a friend who sounded like he was holding back tears as best he could. The disbelief was heavy in his voice. "I had to get out of that bar man", he repeatedly said. After hanging up, TC explained that he had just been trying to get everyone in ***The Time*** back together for one last moment of unity. Now, he said with a mix of disbelief and helplessness, “Man… it's crazy. It's something that won't ever be able to happen again.”

We sat in the parking lot with the car still, and the night felt colder than it did a few minutes before. As **'Cool' by The Time** played through the speakers, TC told me stories about what Jellybean meant to the Twin Cities. "You hear those background vocals?" I looked over waiting for the rest, "That's Sue Ann!". TC talked about his sister Sue Ann, and how she used to rush home with excitement saying, “Check this s*** out, that's me singing background,” and how she always had the records before anyone else did.

In that moment, while listening to the stories and the music, I dialed in on the fact that all of our clocks are ticking, how every single one of us is on borrowed time, and how the most valuable thing we leave behind are the memories we create in the lives of others.

The community and family are feeling the loss of an important piece of history right now. But even in the middle of tragedy, no matter where we are when the news finds us, we are all spending our time. Whether you're at a bar, or fast asleep in the studio, or laughing in the living room with your family, whatever is happening elsewhere... is always... happening. And moments like these remind us that every second we are given is something to be cherished.

—Jordan Lyles, November 21st, 2025

Garry "Jellybean" Johnson was born in Chicago in 1956, but Minneapolis is where he would move and call home. Early on, he taught himself drums and guitar and later on started playing with Flyte Tyme, a local band that already had its own identity before the city knew what it was sitting on. When Prince stepped in and reshaped Flyte Tyme into The Time, bringing Morris Day in as the frontman, Jellybean locked in as the drummer. That was the start of something bigger.

He wasn't locked into one lane. Drums, guitar, writing, studio work; Ol' Jellybean handled whatever the music called for. That versatility helped shape what people later labeled the **Minneapolis Sound.**

Ice Cream Castle
THE TIME
THE TIME
Ice Cream Castle

GARRY "JELLYBEAN" JOHNSON WAS BORN ON NOVEMBER 19, 1956, AND PASSED 2 DAYS AFTER CELEBRATING HIS BIRTHDAY, ON NOVEMBER 21, 2025, AT THE AGE OF 69.

PRINCE WORE SNEAKERS TOO

D*early beloved,*

Royal, my lineage. Supper for plenty kids. Save all the oil in tupperware. Wrap foil the itty bits. Remember the roots just like I remember the city's scent. Can't change over pretty pennies, that wouldn't make any sense. Kawhi brought a hoop to the porch of grounds where the city sits. I stood right behind him as they take flicks for the LA times. **"Fast forward when I'm twenty six."** I'm giving back similar ways. I moved here when I was six.

Since then I knew I would be global. Used to hear whispers when passing corners. Guardians all around me, seen silhouettes with my cornea. Corduroy flooded pants with a dream to be something more than another check for the coroner. Always knew I'd make a name. My mama water broke on the Hollywood walk of fame. Can't say it ain't symbolic. And no it 'bout no fame. I just eat with tax collectors and sinners to change the game. Just like physicians are for the ill, musicians are for the pain.

From baby boys with hoop dreams and hoopties and loose change, I never saw more beauty. Said how did we go from baby boys with hoop dreams and roofies and cruel streets. I never thought I would see. Never see more than the cards that were dealt. When it all was a dream

Hoops taught me how to dream. The group taught me 'bout a team. The truth taught me that what seems is usually about the C.R.E.A.M. The music taught esteem. I pull from Tupac and Albert Green. I'm like a church van with candy paint and cushiony caddy seats.

Mike taught me invest. Trina taught me keep the pallet green. Moms taught me prayer. Pops taught me 'bout the battle ring. Lolita just sat with the Reverend Bernice King. Three years ago gave birth to my sweet niece, a family gene.

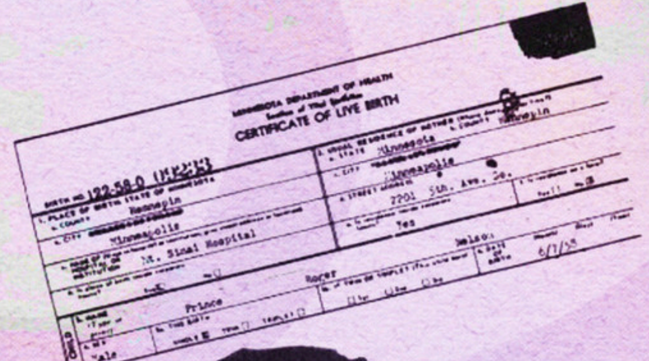
Royal, the lineage. Trust, never penny pinch. Can't stop the plan of God like when Candace snitches on Phineas and Ferb. I curve the slurs and just walk through life as an instrument. **"They tried to call me Mini Prince."** I'm Jordan Lyles, the first. He came in a dream said he was proud of me. He probably more proud of this verse. I talk to legends all the time. At this point I'm starting to blend. I talk to God even more. At this point I'm starting rebirth.

— from the record, Baby Boys with Hoop Dreams.

The Purple Pages

THE STORY BEHIND BABY BOYS WITH HOOP DREAMS
AND WHY IT ALL MAKES SENSE NOW.

Eighth-grade yearbook



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Section of Vital Statistics

CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH

BIRTH NO. 122-58-0

Hennepin

Minneapolis

Mt. Sinai Hospital

Minnesota

Minneapolis

Hennepin

2201 5th. Ave. So.

Yes

CHILD

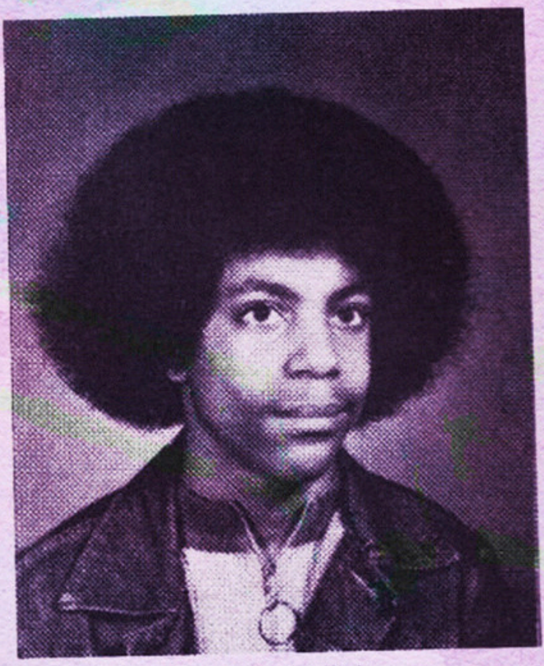
Prince

Roger

Nelson

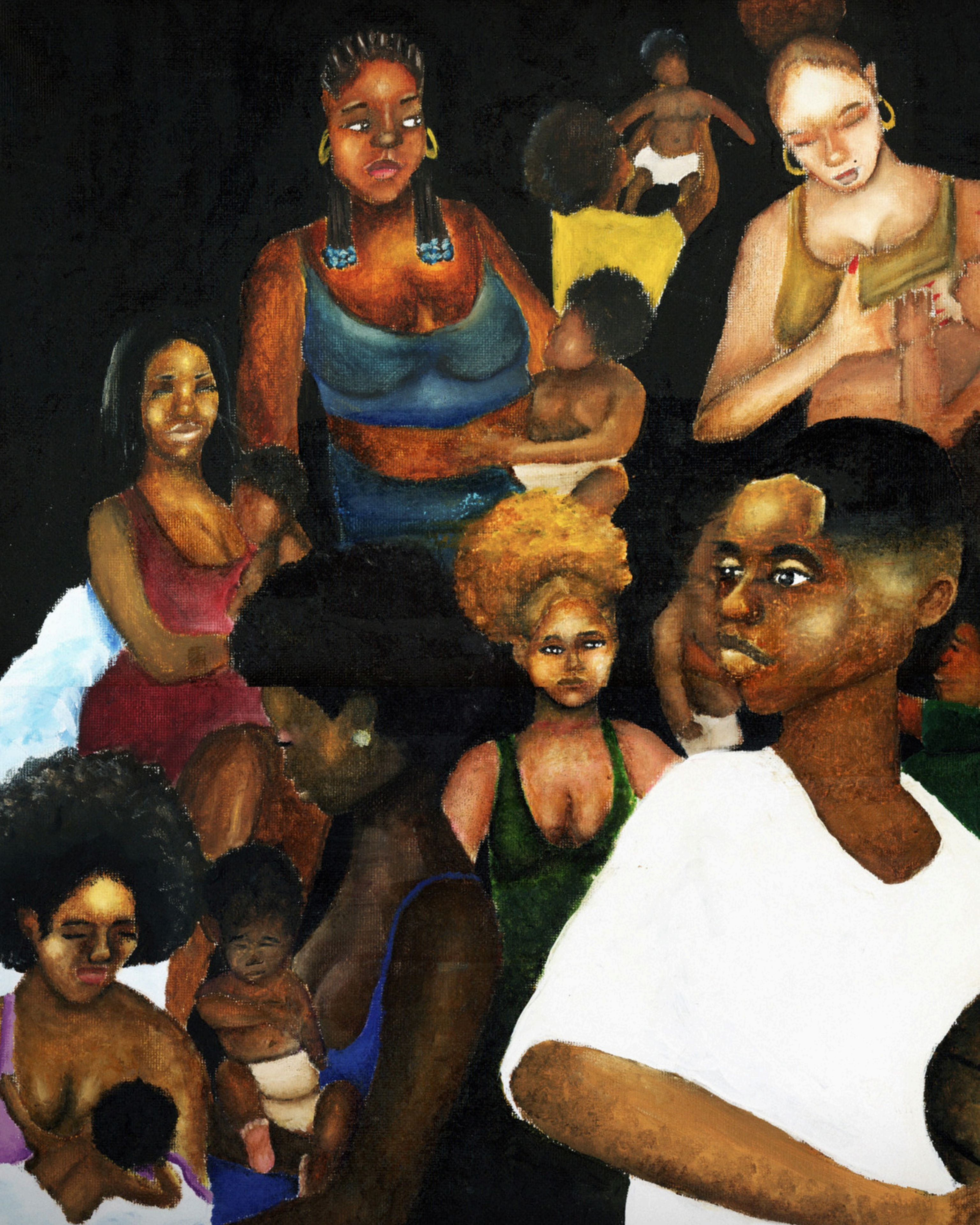
6/7/58

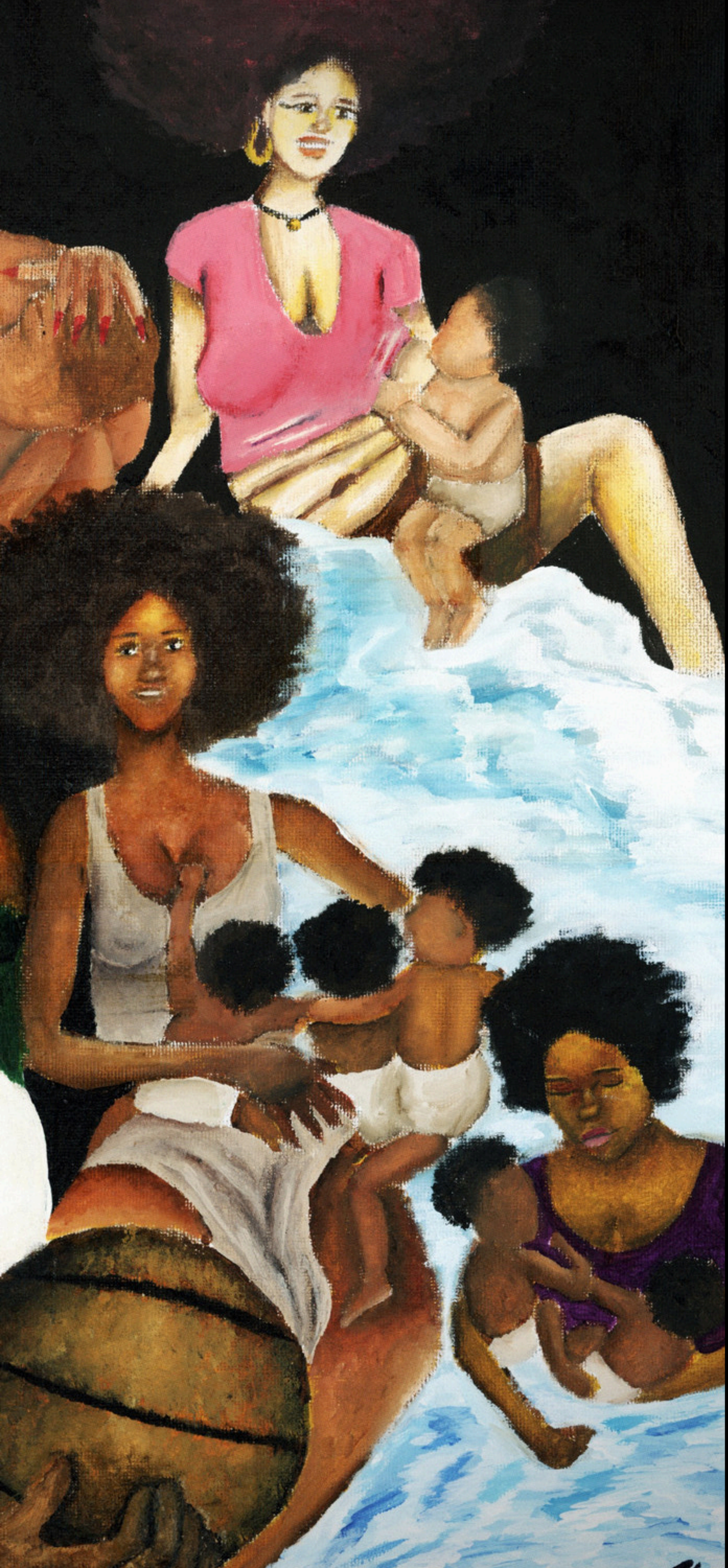
Male

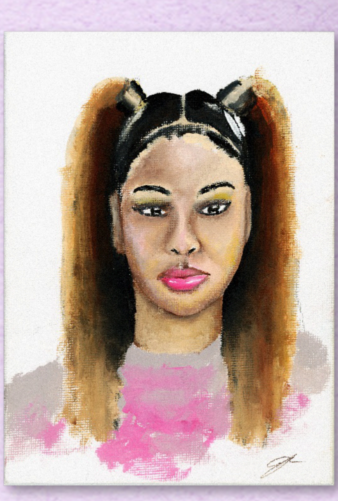


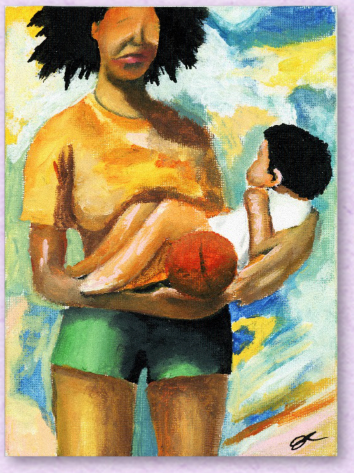
Ninth grade at Bryant Junior High

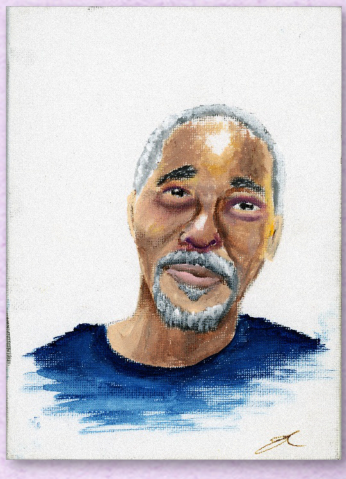
The junior high jock



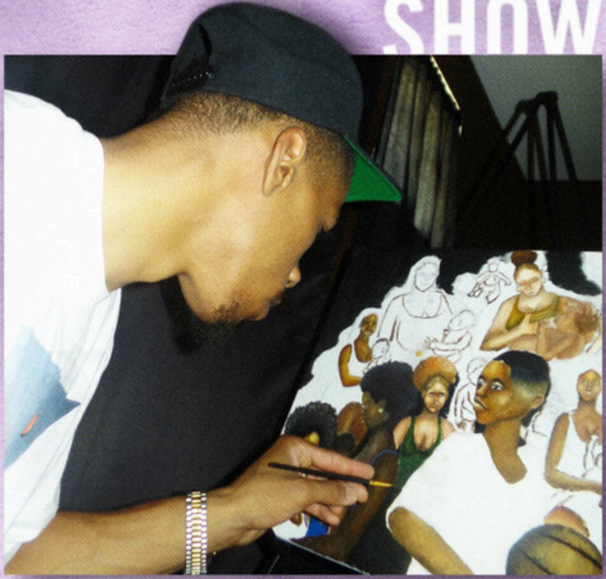








CHAPPELLE'S SHOW



— 'Baby Boys with Hoop Dreams' cover art, 2022

— paintings by ***Jordan Lyles***

MY FIRST INTRODUCTION TO PRINCE WAS A DAVE CHAPPELLE SKIT

"MY SECOND INTRODUCTION TO PRINCE WAS WHEN I MET HIM IN A DREAM"

— the following pages will consist of excerpts from the book ***'Baby Boys with Hoop Dreams'*** by Jordan Lyles, detailing the story of how a dream about Prince followed with a domino effect of events that lead to this very magazine.

Prince had first entered my memory in the days where I was sharing a room with my brother. It was a late school night and we were watching ***Chappelle's Show***. It was the skit where Charlie Murphy tells the story of playing basketball with Prince and his band, The Revolution, in the 1980s. But at the time, I didn't even know who Prince was, so though it was funny, it's like telling an inside joke to a stranger.

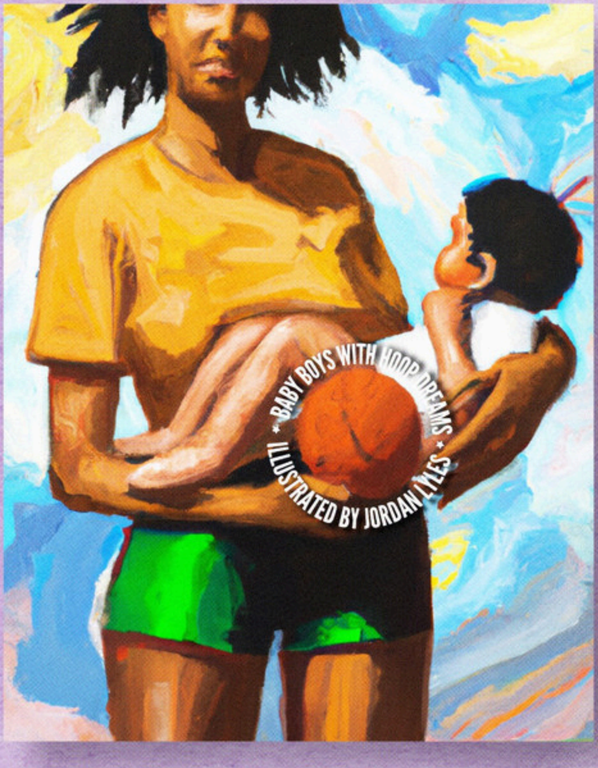
The skit originally aired on Comedy Central on February 18, 2004, but we were watching reruns, so this had to be around 2006. At the time, we were living in Moreno Valley, having moved from San Bernardino earlier that year.

Fifteen years later, in 2021, I had three dreams about Prince. By the second one, I was thinking, *Why am I dreaming about Prince?* By now, I'd obviously knew who he was, but in my mind, he was always just "the guy they compared to Michael Jackson" or "the guy from that Dave Chappelle skit."

The first one on August 21st, 2021—I was making a song with Prince. Second dream, August 27th, 2021—Prince was telling me he was proud of me and giving me advice. Telling me to stay in control, and trust my gut. He was telling me to be firm about my work, and continue to make what I want to make. Third dream was November 19th, 2021—Prince was walking down the main street where I used to walk to school.

These dreams were completely out of the blue, and after those three, they stopped just as fast as they started. Out of all of them, the second one made the strongest impression. Looking back, though, if you put two and two together, the third dream has taken on new significance as well.

Some time later, after some tears, a few prayers and a couple phone calls, I was introduced to David 'TC' Ellis. I had no clue of his history with Prince; I later found out and since then, there has been a domino effect of connections that root back to these Prince dreams. I'm not sure why God allowed Prince to serve as a sort of *guardian angel* in my life, but somehow, that's what it feels like. It's something I keep to self and carry quietly—but as it all unfolds, I'll keep typing it in size 10 font until someone cares enough to read the fine print.



SHIRTS *Blouses*

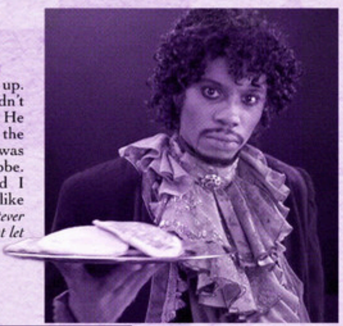
"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to tonight's matchup here in the Twin Cities. ***Shirts vs Blouses***!"

Standing at **5 foot 3**, moving like he's got somewhere better to be; and honestly, he probably does. PRINCE!

The crowd rises, not because he gestured for them to, but because apparently their bodies didn't have a choice. He walked to the scorer's table like the stadium belonged to him, like the rim already agreed to cooperate, and like defense is a suggestion, not a rule.

See, Prince walked onto that court. Wait... no, no, no. Prince *glided* out there. Man didn't make a sound. Shoes ain't squeak and ain't tap. He just floated and the whole gym stopped.

Prince didn't warm up. Didn't stretch. Didn't do no layup lines. He just picked up the basketball like it was part of his wardrobe. Spun it once. And I promise you, it was like the ball said, *"Whatever you want me to do, just let me know."*



As the game went on; Prince ain't sweaty, he ain't pressed, not even remotely concerned - just *calm*. The kind of calm that makes everybody else look like they're trying too hard.

Prince was the only person they'd ever witness say "Good game." before the tip off occurred.

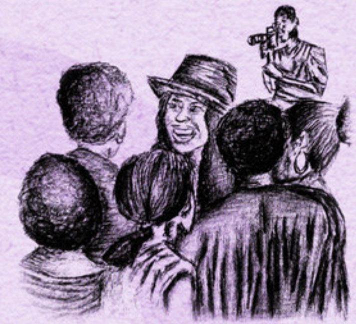
In ***Baby Boys With Hoop Dreams***, Jordan Lyles pays tribute to Prince through a song called "***Prince Dreams***." This isn't about name-dropping.

Prince came into Jordan Lyles' life out of the blue, first in a dream, then through TC Ellis, a longtime friend and collaborator of Prince who became a pivotal mentor.

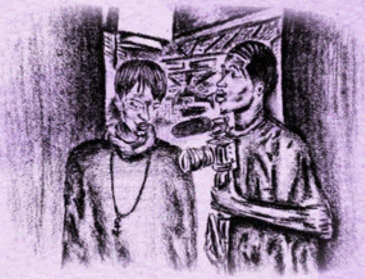
Through TC, Jordan found guidance and a connection to Prince's legacy, and now 4 years later in Minnesota, he's working in a space where his basketball, music, and faith intersect, making all the "Prince Dreams" finally make sense.

The Purple Pages

And so we reach my point, the orchestration of God. Again, I've been writing down my dreams since I was 18 years old and I've seen dreams unfold time after time. However, this one was completely out of the blue. The reason it felt out of the blue is because I hadn't listened to this person's music prior to this experience. When I say my music catalog is narrow, this will put it in perspective of how narrow I'm talking. The person I'm talking about is Prince. I didn't listen to Prince until I was 21 years old. Of course, I've heard talk of Prince. I've seen the Dave Chappelle skit and things of that nature. With the exception of *Purple Rain*, which I only heard because it's impossible not to know that song; I've never personally searched for a Prince song until after I had this dream.



On August 18th, 2021, I dreamed that I was at a Miami Heat game. LeBron James was back on their team roster, and Prince just got done performing at the halftime show. I was in this backroom and different celebrities were back there as well. Erykah Badu was across from me, cracking jokes with this group of people.



While all this was going on, Prince walked into the room. My eyes lit up, and I said to myself, "This is really Prince" and I was trying to get my camera ready to record him, but I was too late. He ended up talking to me and he told me he that was proud of me. He said, "I don't remember what I was doing at your age, but I know we are alike." He was just saying I reminded him of himself.

Then, he invited me to come sit court-side with him to watch the rest of the game.

When I woke up, I carried a different feeling from this dream. I remember I went on a bike ride that morning and just sort of thought about why I possibly would've dreamt that. There really was nothing I'd been doing that could've caused Prince to be in my dream. I tried to recollect if I'd been watching anything relating to him or talking about him or anything, but nothing. Then, three days later on August 21st, I dreamed I was making a song with Prince. Then, yet again, 6 days later on August 27th, I had another dream about Prince. He was telling me he was proud of me and he gave me advice; telling me to stay in control, trust my gut, to be firm about my work, and to continue to make what I want to make. At this point, I knew I wasn't having these dreams for no reason.

In mid September, I received a call from a friend of mine named Dav D. The day before I received this call; I was feeling completely burnt out and almost fell into a depression. I remember sitting on the couch and my lady was just comforting me. I hadn't felt this low in a while. This was around the time when I'd just taken all my music down and everything about my music career was feeling unpredictable. I prayed about my purpose because I felt like I had all my eggs in one basket; my whole life felt dependent on music. While everything seemed like it was on the up and up with the new management and the 2K placement, synonymously, I was on the brink of having a mental breakdown. The phone call from my friend came at the perfect time. He asked if I'd be interested in a job position as a music teacher for a program called *4 Learning*; they were opening up a new location in my city.

Initially, the position was offered to him, but his busy schedule left him unavailable. He told me it was part time, so I'd still have time to focus on my music. He knew that was a priority with me. Everything was last minute and the spot for the position needed to be filled as soon as possible, so I literally made my decision that same day. I told him I was interested and immediately I had a phone interview set up with a cat named Scott Martin.

After the meeting, I was at the school with him the next day, learning the ropes. A day after the visit to the school, I went through another interview on September 16th with Michael Lipset, Tony Simmons, and again, Scott Martin, to finalize whether or not I was the right candidate for the job. Everything went perfect, I was younger than expected for the position but they respected my maturity.

The Purple Pages

The Purple Pages

Ironically, that day was my pop's birthday and I found myself telling them about his influence in my life, giving him credit for the reason I may be perceived as *ahead of my time*. We talked about my upbringing, music influences, and more. Somehow and somewhere in the interview process, I ended up sharing my dream about Prince because it aligned with something that was said in our conversation. Scott then told me, "That's crazy. The founder of this program grew up with Prince." At that moment, I realized why I was having those dreams. We didn't dwell on my dream, but internally, I knew something special was at hand. The way everything happened felt like there was a greater purpose beyond just my own desires.

David "TC" Ellis is the founder and CEO of *Studio-4* and *High School for Recording Arts*. He was born in St. Paul, Minnesota.

He grew up with Prince. Later, in their adulthood, TC was recruited by Prince and *Warner Brothers*. After time spent working with Prince and *Warner Brothers*, he started an independent recording studio called *Studio-4,* and worked with a variety of educational programs. Through this work, he came in contact with the troubled youth, specifically young black men. TC realized these young artists would often ask questions about how to copyright and publish their work. He would help them out and he eventually realized the educational potential behind the work being done. With that realization, the *High School for Recording Arts*, was born in Minnesota. *4 Learning* is the sister organization to the *High School for Recording Arts*. It's a program spreading across the country and a job position landed right on my front porch.

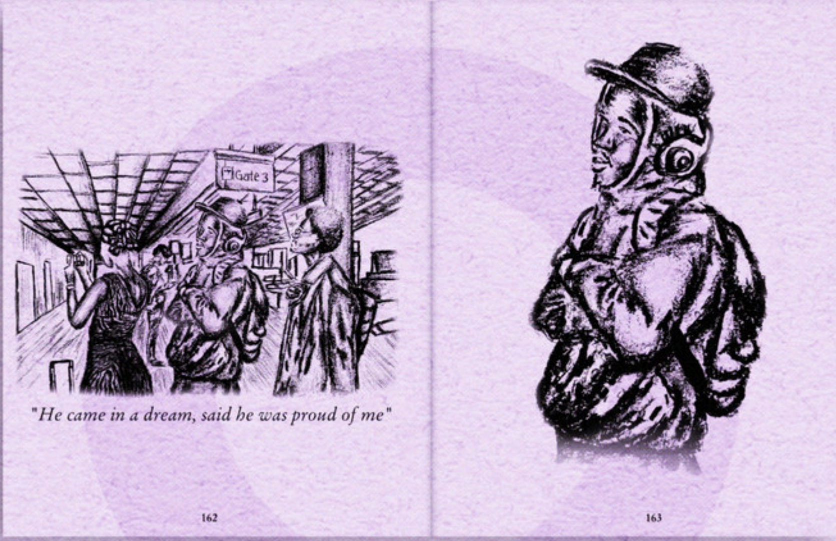
After my first official day of teaching, during my drive back home, I found myself laughing. I remembered when I was a child, I had a favorite TV show called *Class of 3000*. It was a cartoon created by Andre 3000. In a nutshell, the show was about a superstar music sensation who left his career behind after growing tired of the music industry. He eventually, became a music teacher and role model for a group of students at a school of performing arts in his hometown, Atlanta. As a child, I used to run in the house to make sure I didn't miss the episode premieres. I had the dialogue and songs memorized word for word. On my 9th birthday, my older sister got me a *Class of 3000* tee shirt; I wore it out until it was dingy and the print was peeling off. I loved that shirt. I remember they even had this little computer game on the internet called *Funk Box*. The game would let you make beats with all the character's instruments from the TV show.

At the time, I didn't even realize I was being taught how to produce music through an adobe flash player computer game. Now, here I am in the present time, a music teacher, teaching students how to produce. I laughed to myself because God has a sense of humor. Again, connecting the dots, realizing a story was unfolding.

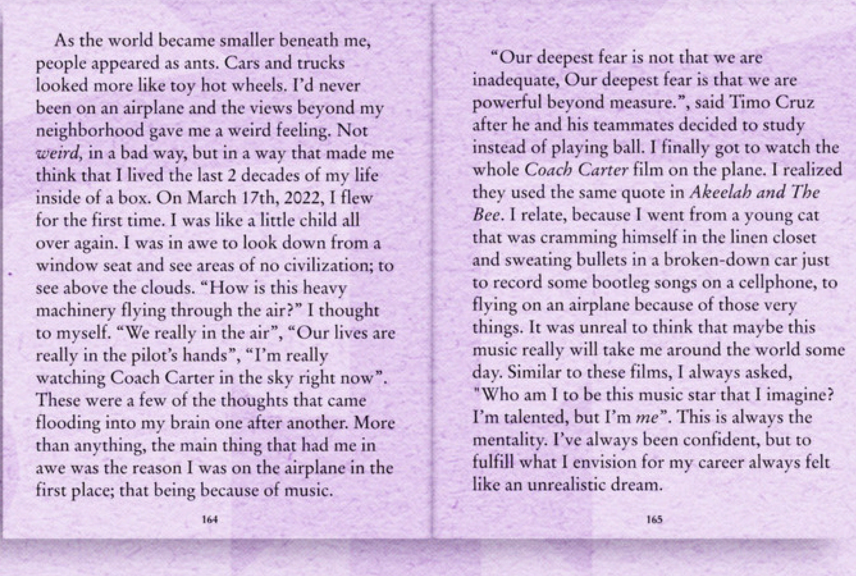
I didn't know how it'd come to pass and I'm still figuring it out, but I always prayed about being able to live off of my music. I'd always known within myself that someday music would open doors for me. However, the process has been one that takes trust and patience; the way God writes the timeline never fails to amaze me. On November 19th, 2021, I had yet another dream about Prince. I dreamt he was walking down our main street. He was walking on the sidewalk I used to walk on when going to school. He passed by the big empty dirt field that I spoke about in the previous chapter. Again, as a kid, I'd walk past that field every day and imagine myself building something there. In the dream, I was thinking to myself, "Out of all the places he could be, Prince is on our street."

Almost exactly 4 months after this dream, TC booked a flight for Scott and I to come out and visit St. Paul-Minneapolis, Minnesota; TC's hometown, the home of the High School for Recording Arts, and also the hometown of Prince. As I sat at the airport, I realized I was about to fly to Prince's stomping grounds. "So, that's what that dream meant", is something I find myself saying more often than not.

The Purple Pages

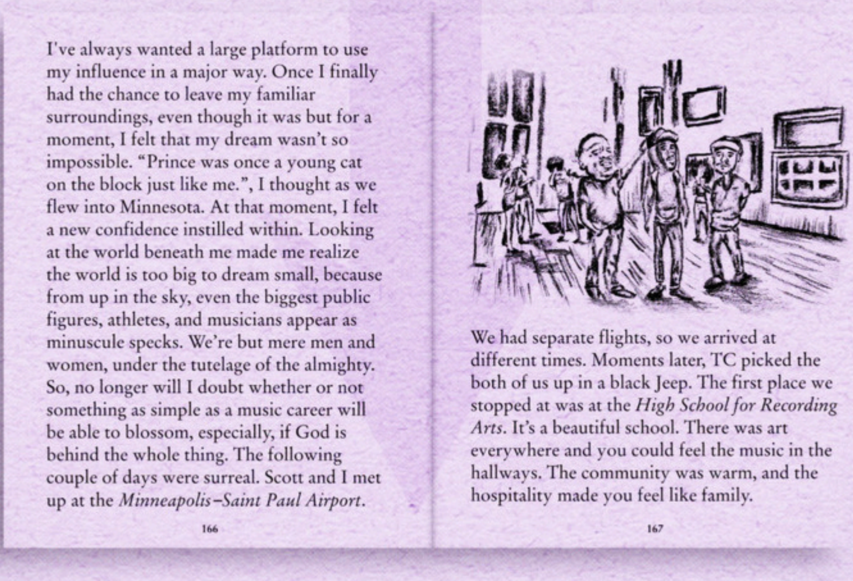


"*He came in a dream, said he was proud of me*"



As the world became smaller beneath me, people appeared as ants. Cars and trucks looked more like toy hot wheels. I'd never been on an airplane and the views beyond my neighborhood gave me a weird feeling. Not *weird,* in a bad way, but in a way that made me think that I lived the last 2 decades of my life inside of a box. On March 17th, 2022, I flew for the first time. I was like a little child all over again. I was in awe to look down from a window seat and see areas of no civilization; to see above the clouds. "How is this heavy machinery flying through the air?" I thought to myself. "We really in the air", "Our lives are really in the pilot's hands", "I'm really watching Coach Carter in the sky right now". These were a few of the thoughts that came flooding into my brain one after another. More than anything, the main thing that had me in awe was the reason I was on the airplane in the first place; that being because of music.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate, Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.", said Timo Cruz after he and his teammates decided to study instead of playing ball. I finally got to watch the whole *Coach Carter* film on the plane. I realized they used the same quote in *Akeelah and The Bee*. I relate, because I went from a young cat that was cramming himself in the linen closet and sweating bullets in a broken-down car just to record some bootleg songs on a cellphone, to flying on an airplane because of those very things. It was unreal to think that maybe this music really will take me around the world some day. Similar to these films, I always asked, "Who am I to be this music star that I imagine? I'm talented, but I'm *me*". This is always the mentality. I've always been confident, but to fulfill what I envision for my career always felt like an unrealistic dream.



I've always wanted a large platform to use my influence in a major way. Once I finally had the chance to leave my familiar surroundings, even though it was but for a moment, I felt that my dream wasn't so impossible. "Prince was once a young cat on the block just like me.", I thought as we flew into Minnesota. At that moment, I felt a new confidence instilled within. Looking at the world beneath me made me realize the world is too big to dream small, because from up in the sky, even the biggest public figures, athletes, and musicians appear as minuscule specks. We're but mere men and women, under the tutelage of the almighty. So, no longer will I doubt whether or not something as simple as a music career will be able to blossom, especially, if God is behind the whole thing. The following couple of days were surreal. Scott and I met up at the *Minneapolis–Saint Paul Airport*.

We had separate flights, so we arrived at different times. Moments later, TC picked the both of us up in a black Jeep. The first place we stopped at was at the *High School for Recording Arts*. It's a beautiful school. There was art everywhere and you could feel the music in the hallways. The community was warm, and the hospitality made you feel like family.

The Purple Pages

The Purple Pages

The whole time we were there, the environment had me wishing that I was back in high school. The school was just like the performing arts school in the cartoon I used to watch. It was literally *Class of 3000,* in real life. They had a big studio for the students to record. There were instruments everywhere, and I couldn't help but think, "Do these kids know how blessed they are?" Scott and I are both grown men, and we were both like kids in a candy store. Furthermore, we did quite a bit in a span of three days. TC drove us around the city and took us to different spots. As we roamed, he also told us a handful of stories. We all shared conversations of great depth. There were a lot of gems shared and we were all getting to know each other better. Just being out there had me inspired. So, by the time we were back at the airport on March 19th, I was ready to get back to creating after feeling burnt out for the past month.

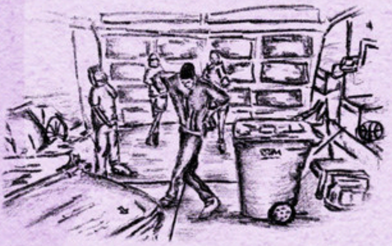
After visiting Minnesota, life began to feel like it was moving fast. Ultimately, I felt renewed, so my head was in a solid place to manage the waves. There was good news, bad news, high emotions, and low ones. As I run down a brief timeline, it will help put this entire book into perspective. Everything I speak of in the rest of this chapter took place in 2022, from March to June. During this short span of time, life became a rollercoaster, and I felt like I was going 100 miles per hour each day. I believe it came to a point where God had to give me no choice but to sit down somewhere and reflect; which brought about the creation of this book.

On March 25th, the NBA 2K check came in the mail, confirming a dream I had 2 years ago in 2020 about receiving a check from the NBA.

Byze played a big part in promoting this song. Bizarrely, the next day on March 26th, was Byze's funeral. That's when the reality set in for me. Then on March 27th, I went to the Black Market Flea and ran into Cozz; and that whole experience I previously spoke about took place. On March 30th, I invested in a bunch of new studio equipment. I was mentally focused. On April 5th, I received a job offer as a videographer for a school district that was going to pay 35 an hour, plus benefits. I was conflicted because it was a great opportunity, but it wasn't really going to work for me. I've never been money driven, so it wasn't too heavy on me. But at the same time, I felt "Maybe I need to just go ahead." The only thing is, I was finally in a good place where I had time to focus on music and make money on the side. The previous year, I just got out of a 9 to 5, and I knew that my time was precious.

And so, I prayed for wisdom. Keep in mind, the people reached out asking who I was because I had just shot a documentary series for the basketball team at my old high school and they loved my video work. During the interview, I can tell they were probably prepared to hire me; until the point I told them my teaching job was a priority. I didn't want to just abandon my students. I went over a few ways we could compromise, but of course, I knew how it'd go. But ultimately, if they wanted me to work with *them*, they were going to have to work with *me*. After the interview, I almost felt like I had passed a test. It felt like God was molding my character. Though it wasn't to this extremity, I felt slightly proud because I didn't make a decision based on money and good talk. In this industry, I know that mentality will be tested.

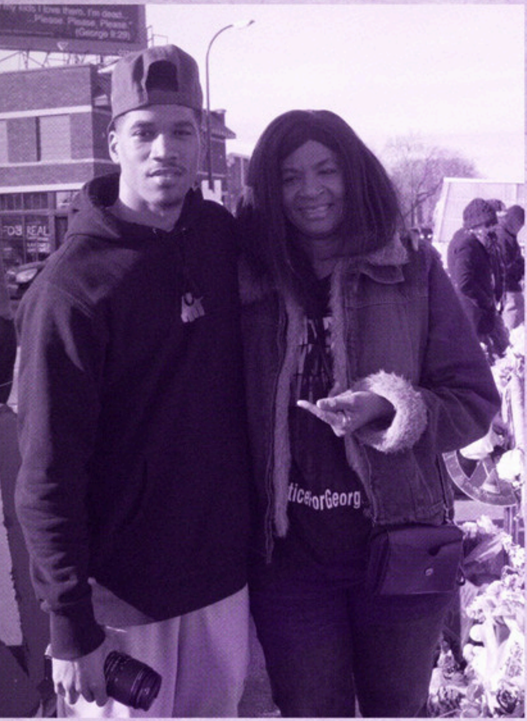
That same night, on April 5th, I had another dream about Prince. I haven't had anymore dreams about him since this day. In this dream, I was with Prince and we were talking and joking around. I asked him a question that made him stop and think for a second. I don't recall what the question was and don't want to tell the dream inaccurately. Furthermore, the dream transitioned to my parent's garage. The people in the garage with me were my brother, one of his friends, and Uncle Gene. My brother had played this music video from when we were kids and it caused me to start crying. Then, I started singing Prince's song *Purple Rain* as a parody and I was doing dance moves like James Brown and Prince. Everybody was laughing and carrying on. Then, Uncle Gene came up to me and said, "Get ready for tomorrow. I know you're excited, but things are about to get busy."



When I woke up, per usual, I immediately wrote the dream down, or else I'd end up forgetting. Some would probably wonder how I can forget dreams like this, but I write almost all my dreams down that feel significant and that's a lot of dreams to remember. Most times, when I revisit dreams I wrote, I don't remember writing some of them down.

The Purple Pages

ANGELA HARRELSON



— Angela Harrelson and Jordan Lyles; taken in the spring of 2022.

This visit was Scott & Jordan's first time in Minnesota, TC showed them around the Twin Cities. The three shared conversation and expressed remorse with aunty of George Floyd, Angela Harrelson. She described her mission and the fight to keep Floyd's memorial protected from removal.

— David 'TC' Ellis (left) Scott Martin (right) look on to the memorial sight.

Angela Harrelson didn't step into leadership — she was thrown into it. When her nephew, George Perry Floyd, was murdered by former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, Harrelson became the closest family member in the Twin Cities. Overnight, her private life ended.

At first, she didn't want that spotlight. She didn't ask for the interviews, the cameras, the podiums, or the weight of the world's grief sitting on her shoulders. But Harrelson leaned into her faith when everything else around her was falling apart. She remembers feeling God speak to her spirit. Floyd said "I can't breathe" 27 times as Chauvin knelt on him for more than nine agonizing minutes. Harrelson said she felt God reminding her; if He gave George the strength to speak those words, He could give her the strength to speak for him.

Five years later, Harrelson has grown into that calling with a depth she didn't know she carried. She continues her work through public speaking and through Rise and Remember, the nonprofit dedicated to Floyd's legacy and the transformation of the site where he was killed.

At 38th and Chicago, a place now known globally, she moves with familiarity and peace. She hugs neighbors, checks in on families, and speaks to people the same way she always has."For me, pouring back into the community is part of my healing," she said. But the spotlight came before healing ever had a chance. "I don't know that I actually got to grieve," she said.

Growing up in rural North Carolina in the '60s and '70s, one of fourteen siblings, she saw discrimination daily. Her father had to fight just to get the school bus to stop for them, and when it finally did, the Black students were forced to stand while enduring insults and occasional violence.

But she never forgot the moment a white classmate spoke up and said it was wrong. That act of bravery stuck with her. It taught her the responsibility that comes with having a voice.

"When you're the only person in the room who can make a difference," she said, "you have to say it with your whole chest."

Her life took her across the country and through the ranks of the Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, and Air Force Reserve, before finally bringing her to Minnesota in 1998. As a registered nurse, she's cared for patients from every walk of life. Even recently, while working with mental health patients at Regions Hospital, she stepped in when a colleague made an unfair assumption about a Black patient. She corrected it immediately with firmness, but with love. The colleague later apologized and embraced her.

"I'm a fighter now," she said. "But I still fight with love."

Harrelson lives in Eagan but spends much of her time in Minneapolis, especially around the memorial site. She watches the police drive through, often without stepping out of their cars — and hopes one day to see deeper community engagement, not just patrols passing by.

"I stay optimistic," she said. "I just think change moves slow."

Harrelson misses her nephew deeply. She remembers him not as an icon, a headline, or a tragedy, but as charismatic, loving, a natural connector. She often says that if someone else in the community had been hurt, he would've been one of the first to show up and advocate for them.

And so that's what she does now.

Angela Harrelson didn't ask to be a voice for justice but she became one anyway. Not because she wanted influence, but because tragedy demanded courage, and courage demanded truth. And she chose to speak that truth with all her chest.

– Angela Harrelson and David 'TC Ellis'

Harrelson feels some things have changed for the better since Floyd's murder. She's happy with a Minnesota law restraining officers from using chokeholds and ordering officers to act if they see a colleague violating use-of-force policies. She wants to see qualified immunity, which protects police from damages in civil lawsuits, removed.

– Scott Martin alongside a Minneapolis resident. About 100 yards from the "Say Their Names" cemetery.

"God made me realize there's a difference between anointed and appointed," she said. "Some people sign up for this stuff, to be a civil rights activist or to protest. But then there's certain people where God says, 'You can do this. I will give you all the tools you need.'"

"I want to take a moment to talk about someone who has been an important part of my journey— Scott Martin; the guy on the left.

It all started with a phone call. I was 21, just quit my 9 to 5 a year earlier and praying about purpose. After this phone call, I had the opportunity of stepping into a teaching position that I wasn't expecting. I thought I would be teaching younger kids, but instead, I was facing students near my own age—or even older. After visiting the site with Scott; the very next day, I called Scott and expressed "I don't know about this, man. I might not be the guy."

"Trust me, you got it." Scott replied.

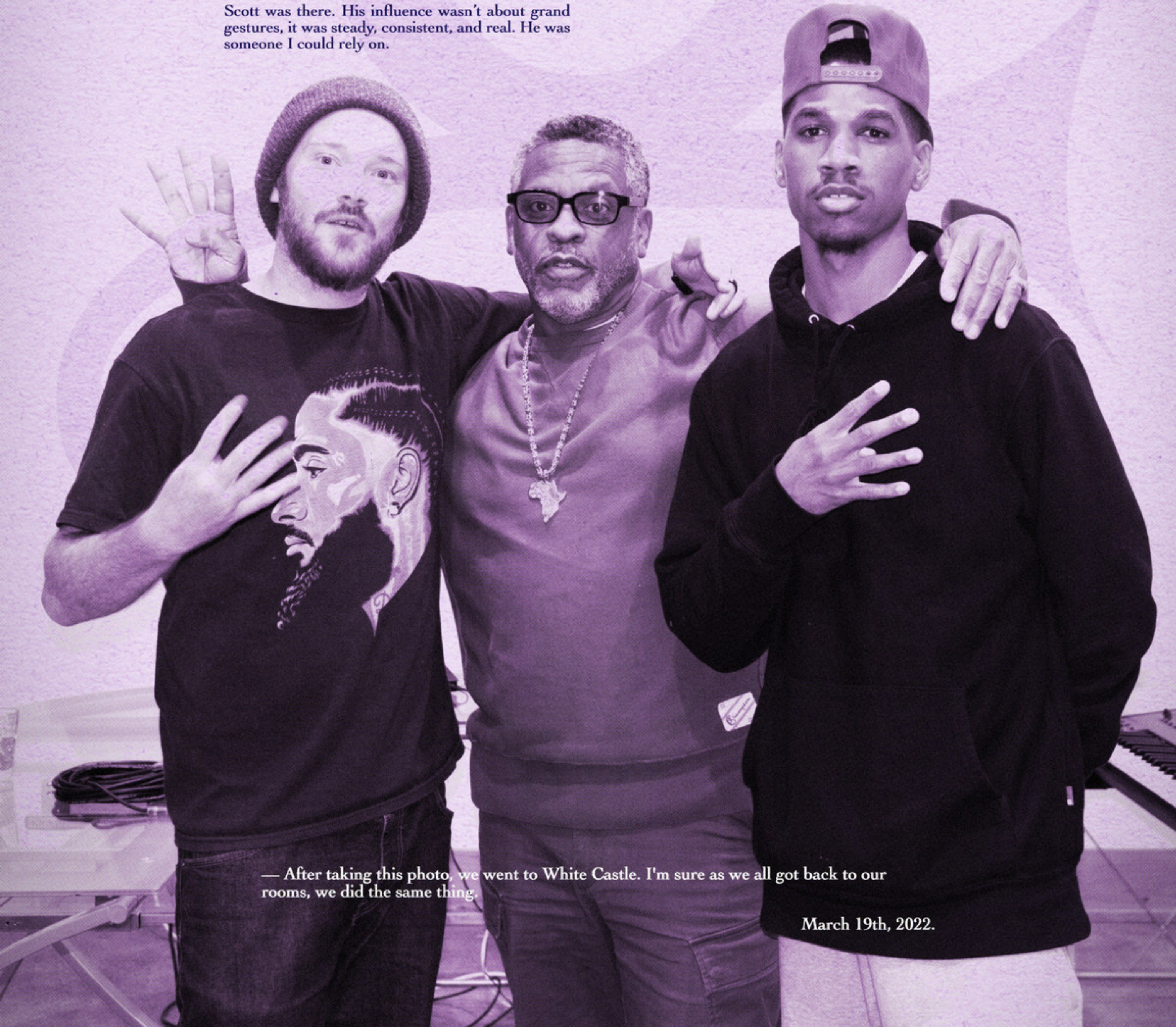
Those words weren't just encouragement. They were confirmation. From that moment, I had someone in my corner who believed in me.

Scott was there. His influence wasn't about grand gestures, it was steady, consistent, and real. He was someone I could rely on.

In March of 2022, TC flew Scott and me out to Minnesota for the first time. That was my first time ever on a plane and that trip was another milestone in a relationship that had only grown stronger over the years.

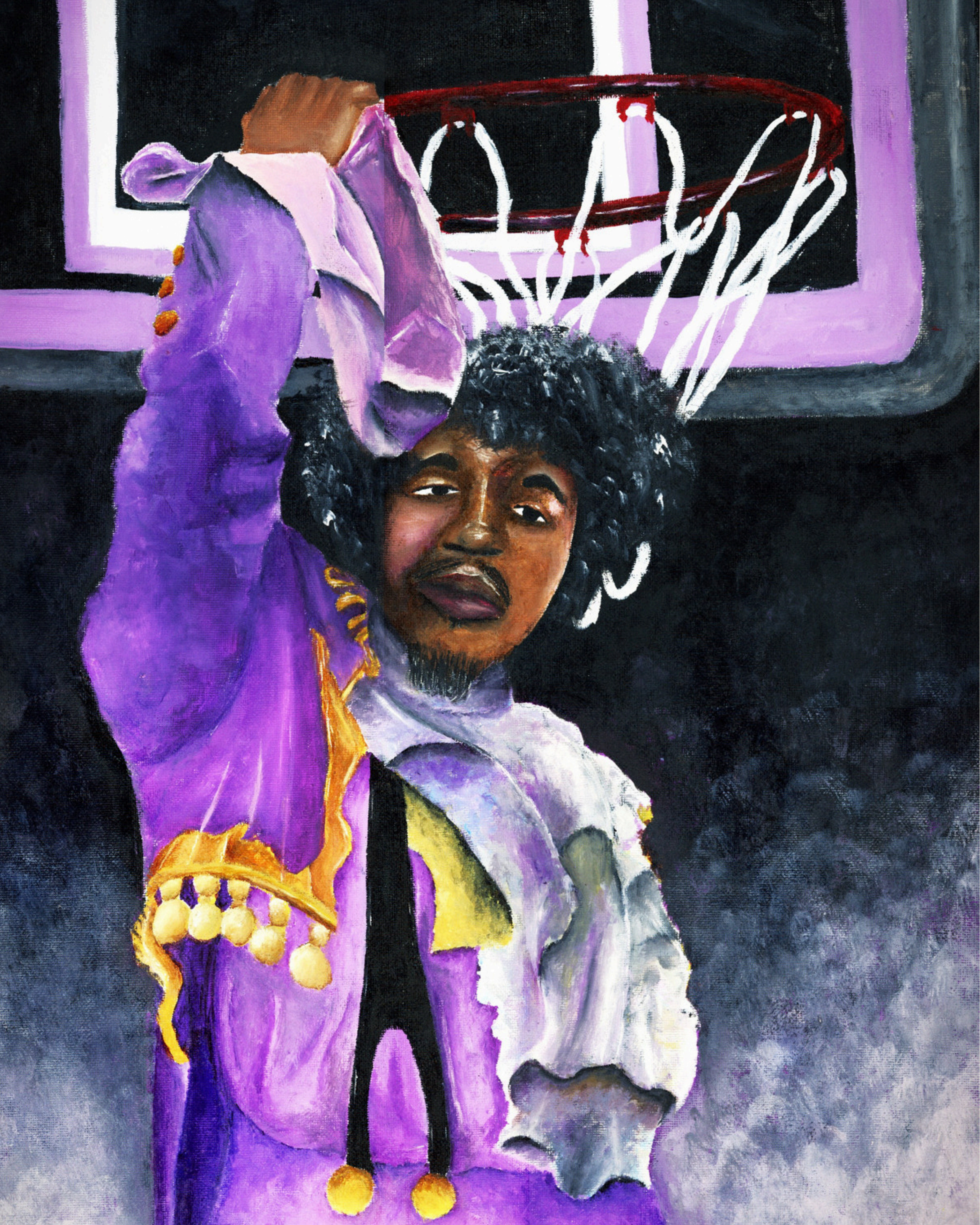
Scott "Tenacity" Martin is more than a professional audio engineer—he is a mentor, guide, and a steady force in the lives of the young people he works with. Based in Los Angeles, Scott brings over 20 years of experience mixing and mastering projects for some of Hip Hop's most notable independent artists. But beyond his technical skill and industry expertise, what truly sets Scott apart is his heart for mentoring and his unwavering belief in the potential of others.

Scott Martin, you deserve every bit of recognition for the lives you've touched, the careers you've shaped, and the inspiration you've given. Your influence is felt far beyond the studio, and I'm grateful to have had you in my corner for the past 4 years."



— After taking this photo, we went to White Castle. I'm sure as we all got back to our rooms, we did the same thing.

March 19th, 2022.



THESE QR CODES ALL DO THE SAME THING

OR DO THEY...

Nothing special behind these QR codes. No films, no songs, bonus chapters, or a direct links to the Baby Boys With Hoop Dreams book. But if you're curious, go ahead.

Next Time On The Purple Pages...

Carwell Inks With Warners

A Singer Is Signed

By Martin Keller

Her saga, thus far, has all the makings of a proverbial, golden success story. The youngest child of talented entertainer parents, a singer at 14 in area nightclubs where her father had to chaperone her, a failed audition—for the right reasons—last year for Earth, Wind & Fire, a refound brother in the music business and a unanimous vote from Warner Brothers Artist and Repertoire committee this year are just a few of the delightful details surrounding 18 year old Minneapolis singer Sue Ann Carwell. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of all though, is the impressive *coup de main* Sue Ann and her managers wielded at a major record company.

"With the record industry still in a slump," said American Artist president Owen Husney, "we managed to get a career oriented, eight album contract that everyone is very pleased with. We leave for Los Angeles the first week in June to sign the papers and begin lining up studio arrangements, a producer and so on." As Husney spoke, there was a happy twinkle in his eye. Carwell is the second major artist to sign with a major record company under Husney and partners Cliff Siegel and Alan Dortman's skillfull guidance. Local soul wonder, Prince, was their first find. And along with Quincy Jones and Giorgio Moroder, Prince is being considered as a possible producer for Sue Ann's first album, scheduled to be recorded in late July or early August. "I'm very excited! I can't believe it's happening," Carwell remarked during an informal gathering at American Artists offices in mid May. While Carwell's enthusiasm seemed downright infectious, it doesn't begin to reflect the heavy expectations some of Warner Brother's biggest execs have for the young singer. Apparently, nearly anyone who's heard her sing is captivated. "The Vice President in charge of Promotion, Russ Thyret—on of Rolling Stone's heavy 100 in the music industry—is in love with her. He's been hot to sign Sue Ann for two years," Husney said. "Not only that," Siegel continued, "but when the A&R board of eight to ten members came together to vote on whether or not she should be signed, they voted unanimously for signing; that didn't happen with Chic, and it should have. It didn't happen with Meatloaf either."

The bidding on Sue Ann's contract started early this year after Husney and Siegel went to Los Angeles with Carwell's Minnesota-made tapes and interested eight major companies. Eventually, Casablanca and Warner Brothers "both offered good deals," with Warner's finally being chosen. The initial interest came, however, two years ago, just after Prince signed to the same label. Thyret heard "a scratched demo" of a couple songs written by Prince with Sue Ann singing lead and dubbing harmonies. Prince naturally played all the musical parts.

That same rough demo was likewise my first encounter with Sue Ann Carwell's talents. Researching a cover story for another music paper, I luckily stumbled on Sue Ann after a good lead from Morris Wilson, a Minneapolis jazz saxaphonist. Not only did she shed positive light on the perennial problems black bands have getting gigs in the Twin Cities, but the then 16 year old proved awesome on the tape. "If she were white," her father, the legendary Bob "Sticks" Carwell noted then "she'd be out on tour and recording. She's got the voice, the harmonics, the attitude, the gift, but not the exposure."

It seems certain Sue Ann Carwell will now have the exposure. But for other talented black musicians, songwriters and singers, a lack of exposure continues to keep them out in the cold, a fact Sue Ann made special note of during the interview. "I want you to mention these people in the article," she said leaning forward to make her point. "There's lots of talented people that I'd work with, but most of them can't even get work here in local clubs. I'd like to do some of William Doughty's songs—he's a local writer and percussionist who taught me congas and drums, and he played on my demos. Then Alexander O'Neil—he's bad! We sing together sometimes in the Enterprize Band of Pleasure." Additionally, Carwell has sung with Flyt Tyme and Fantasy, and worked heavily with James Walsh and players from Gypsy, among them lead guitarist Jim Behringer. Gypsy did most of the backing on Carwell's much sought after demo tape.

Whether or not Sue Ann will realize any work with local writers and musicians, including Prince, whose name gets tossed around with a sanctimonious curve, remains, for now a moot point. "We've heard tons of tapes," Sue Ann noted. "Too many." Carwell herself is writing some material she hopes will go on her lp. Meanwhile, her family, which includes her mother, a former dancer at the Apollo nightclub in New York, and two sisters and five brothers, seem eager for her success. "My brother is runnin' around tellin' everyone he's my manager," she laughed.

But one other brother, an older man named Carl, whom Sue Ann never knew as a child, has helped expose her nationally, in the right circles. Spotting his name on a Columbia Records album, in a group called Freelife, little sister Sue Ann inquired about Carl Carwell. After the two established contact, Carl arranged an audition for Maurice White and Phillip

Continued on page 22

— Sue Ann Photo
Color Restoration
Timelapse

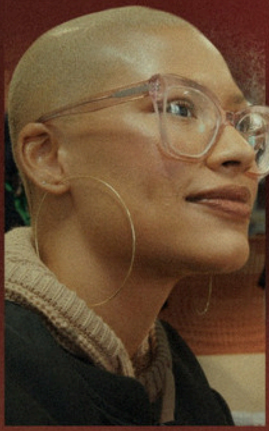
photographed by ***Greg Helgeson***

article refurbished & colored by ***Jordan Lyles***

Sue Ann Carwell: sweet 18 and never been signed.

JAZZMYN RED

JAZZMYN RED is a highly regarded and decorated artist educator, activist, DEIB leader, and U.S. Ambassador of Hip Hop and Cultural Exchange for the United States State Department. She has over 10 years experience as an artist, speaker, event curator and DEIB consultant in the corporate, non-profit, and education sectors. Scan the QR code to view her workshop.



"...and so even on the highway — If I'm listening to DMX in particular. Sometimes I'll look at the speed and be like, "You are doing 90 MPH on the highway. You need to SLOW DOWN!," right? So, music can have this effect on you that you don't even realize. You don't even know what's happening, right? But it also has the opportunity and the effect of either bringing up your mood or making you feel more dreadful.

Now, think about that in the context of a classroom, right? When you walk into a classroom, you could walk into silence—or you could walk into music that's not only reflective of you, but maybe got a little mood boost in it, right? Maybe if we walk into Lovely Day, we might be like, "Oh, okay, this makes me feel good" right?

I used to play JAMES BROWN for my students all the time. They'd be like, "Oh miss, you playing this again? You playing this again?"

I'd be like, "Yeah! I'm playing James Brown," right? And then one day, I remember, I didn't play anything. They came into class, doing their work, and my students—they used to play around all the time—one of them raised his hand. I'm like, "What's up?"

He was like, "Miss, um… you gonna play that guy?"

I'm like, "What guy?"

He's like, "The brown one."

I said, "You mean James Brown?"

He's like, "Yeah."

I'm like, "Yeah, I got you. I'll play him right now."

Right? [laughs] Because it had an effect, right? He acted like he didn't like him—'cause he was old school—but it was something to look forward to. It was something that helped students to concentrate. It was something that was a mood boost.

And so that's just an example of how we can utilize that in our classrooms."

2025

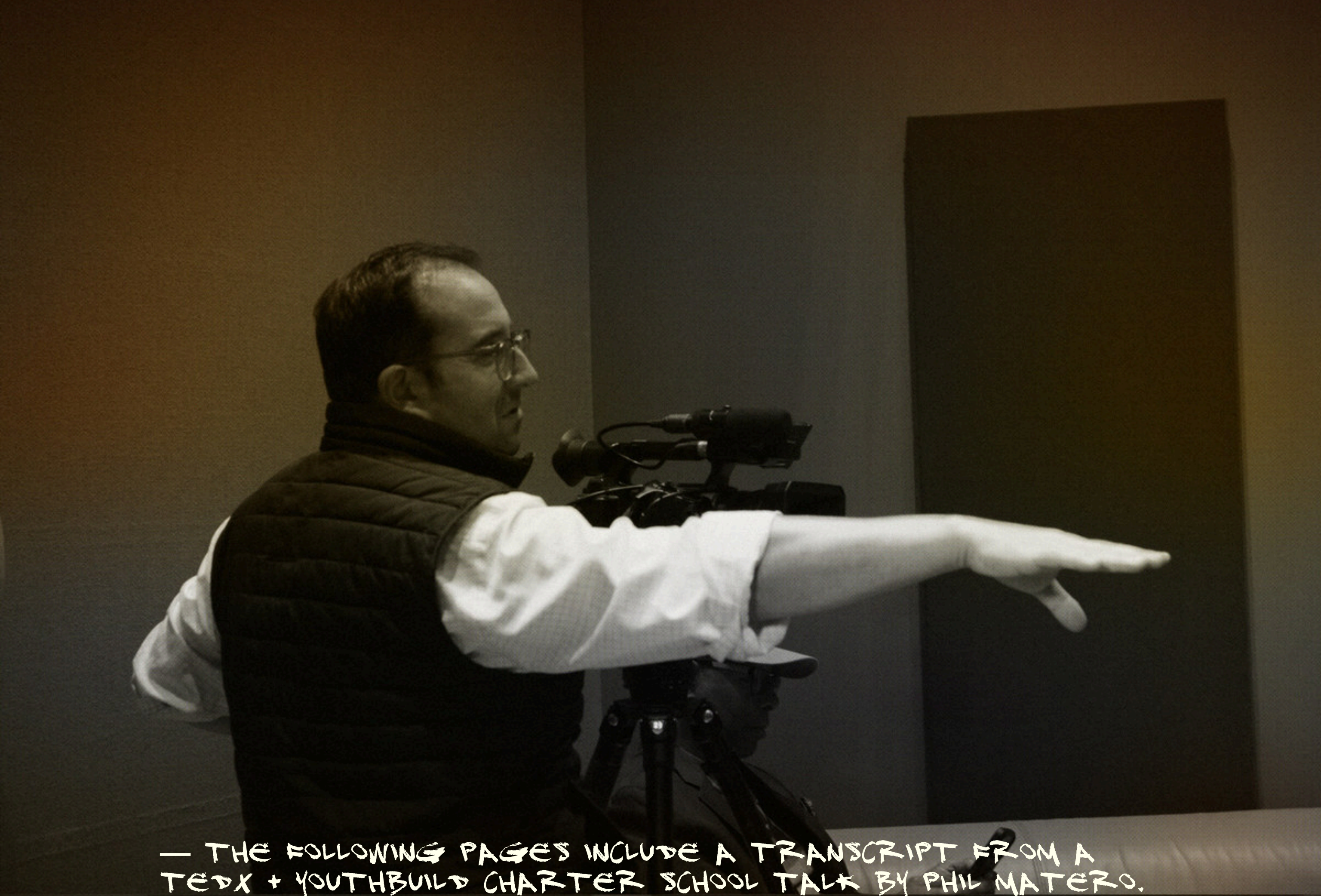
REMIXED

MICHAEL LIPSET NAMED NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LEWIEE BLAZE SITS DOWN AND GIVES WORDS

WATCH THE REMIXED RECAP VIDEO

´REMIXED´, short for Remix Education – is an educational non-profit that promotes creative, project-based learning by "remixing" traditional education. This approach, often called "school remix" or "education remix," uses recording arts and other creative industries to re-engage students in learning, fostering skills like creativity, collaboration, and entrepreneurship. The RemixED Conference is an annual event hosted by 4 Learning where educators, artists, and tech professionals gather to explore these ideas.

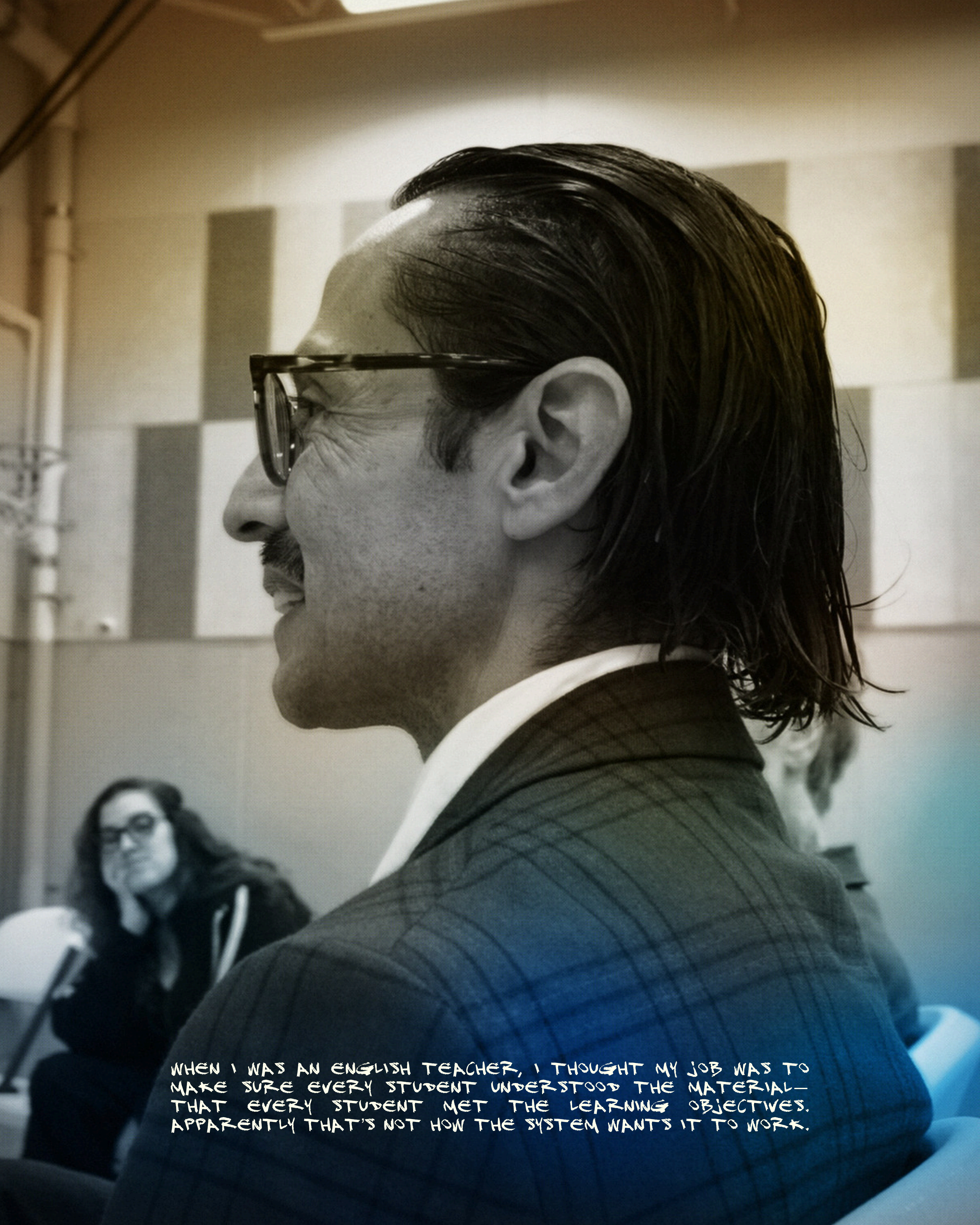


— THE FOLLOWING PAGES INCLUDE A TRANSCRIPT FROM A TEDX + YOUTHBUILD CHARTER SCHOOL TALK BY PHIL MATERO. WHAT YOU'RE ABOUT TO READ IS A TESTAMENT AS TO WHY THE TRADITIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM NEEDS SOME REMIXING.

My name is Phil Matero and I'm the founder of YouthBuild Charter School. Before I started working for YouthBuild Charter School of California, I spent many years with the Los Angeles Conservation Corps. Most people would probably call the work I do dropout recovery, job creation, or youth development. But after hearing so many stories from young people who've been kicked around by the education system, I've become more of an activist, an advocate for social justice in education. The stories I've heard are heartbreaking. Young people being told by their own teachers that they'll never amount to anything. Counselors and administrators pushing them out of school to protect their test scores. It's outrageous. I can't believe what's happening. So my life's work has become finding ways for every young person to succeed—ways for them to feel like they truly achieved something in high school. I love what I do, but I've always wished the system itself did a better job of giving young people real opportunities to succeed. And that's just not happening. There's too much wrong with the system.

Today I'm not going to talk about everything. I'm going to talk about one thing—grades. The way we test, grade, and rank students on a scale based on traditional academic assessments and standardized tests. We've convinced ourselves that we need grades, that this is how school is supposed to work. But it doesn't work.

IT CREATES WINNERS AND LOSERS. KIDS WHO ACE EXAMS GET TO FEEL LIKE WINNERS. KIDS WHO DON'T? THEY WALK AROUND FEELING LIKE FAILURES. LET'S BREAK THIS DOWN. STUDENTS SPEND SIX HOURS A DAY, 180 DAYS A YEAR, FOR TWELVE YEARS IN SCHOOL. THE GOAL SHOULD BE THAT BY THE END, THEY'RE EQUIPPED TO TAKE ON THE WORLD—COLLEGE, WORK, WHATEVER DREAMS THEY HAVE. BUT INSTEAD OF MAKING SURE THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS THEY GAIN ARE MEANINGFUL AND APPLICABLE, WE HAND THEM STANDARDIZED TESTS FULL OF MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS. THESE TESTS AREN'T EVEN DESIGNED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT STUDENTS ARE GOOD AT; THEY MEASURE HOW MUCH THEY CAN REMEMBER OF WHAT THE TEACHER DECIDED WAS IMPORTANT. THEN WE RANK THEM. WE ASSIGN NUMBERS. AND WE ACT LIKE THIS IS WHAT EDUCATION IS SUPPOSED TO BE.



WHEN I WAS AN ENGLISH TEACHER, I THOUGHT MY JOB WAS TO MAKE SURE EVERY STUDENT UNDERSTOOD THE MATERIAL—THAT EVERY STUDENT MET THE LEARNING OBJECTIVES. APPARENTLY THAT'S NOT HOW THE SYSTEM WANTS IT TO WORK.

IF A TEACHER ACTUALLY HELPS EVERY SINGLE STUDENT SUCCEED AND GIVES EVERYONE AN A, THEY GET CALLED INTO THE OFFICE AND TOLD THE GRADES MUST BE REDISTRIBUTED. EVERYONE CAN'T BE A WINNER. THIS SYSTEM REQUIRES LOSERS.

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THE ONLY REASON IT SURVIVES IS BECAUSE IT'S A SIMPLE WAY FOR DISTRICTS AND STATES TO SORT DATA—STUDENT NUMBERS ROLLING INTO TEACHER NUMBERS ROLLING INTO SCHOOL NUMBERS—SO SOMEONE CAN DECIDE WHO GETS BONUSES, WHO GETS FIRED, AND WHICH SCHOOLS ARE CONSIDERED "GOOD." BUT THE NUMBERS AREN'T REAL. THEY DON'T MEASURE WHAT WE PRETEND THEY MEASURE.

WE ALL KNOW STUDENTS WHO CAN EXPLAIN PHOTOSYNTHESIS PERFECTLY BUT MISS A TRICKY MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTION ON THE TEST. WE ALL KNOW KIDS WHO MAKE INCREDIBLE CONNECTIONS IN THEIR LEARNING BUT GET TOLD, "JUST ANSWER WHAT'S ON THE TEST." THESE TESTS REWARD MEMORIZATION AND THE ABILITY TO GUESS WHAT THE TEACHER IS PLANNING TO ASK—NOTHING MORE. THEY DON'T ACCOUNT FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE STRONG IN SOME SUBJECTS BUT NOT OTHERS, OR FOR KIDS WHO GET FIRED UP ABOUT ONE TOPIC AND GO ALL IN.

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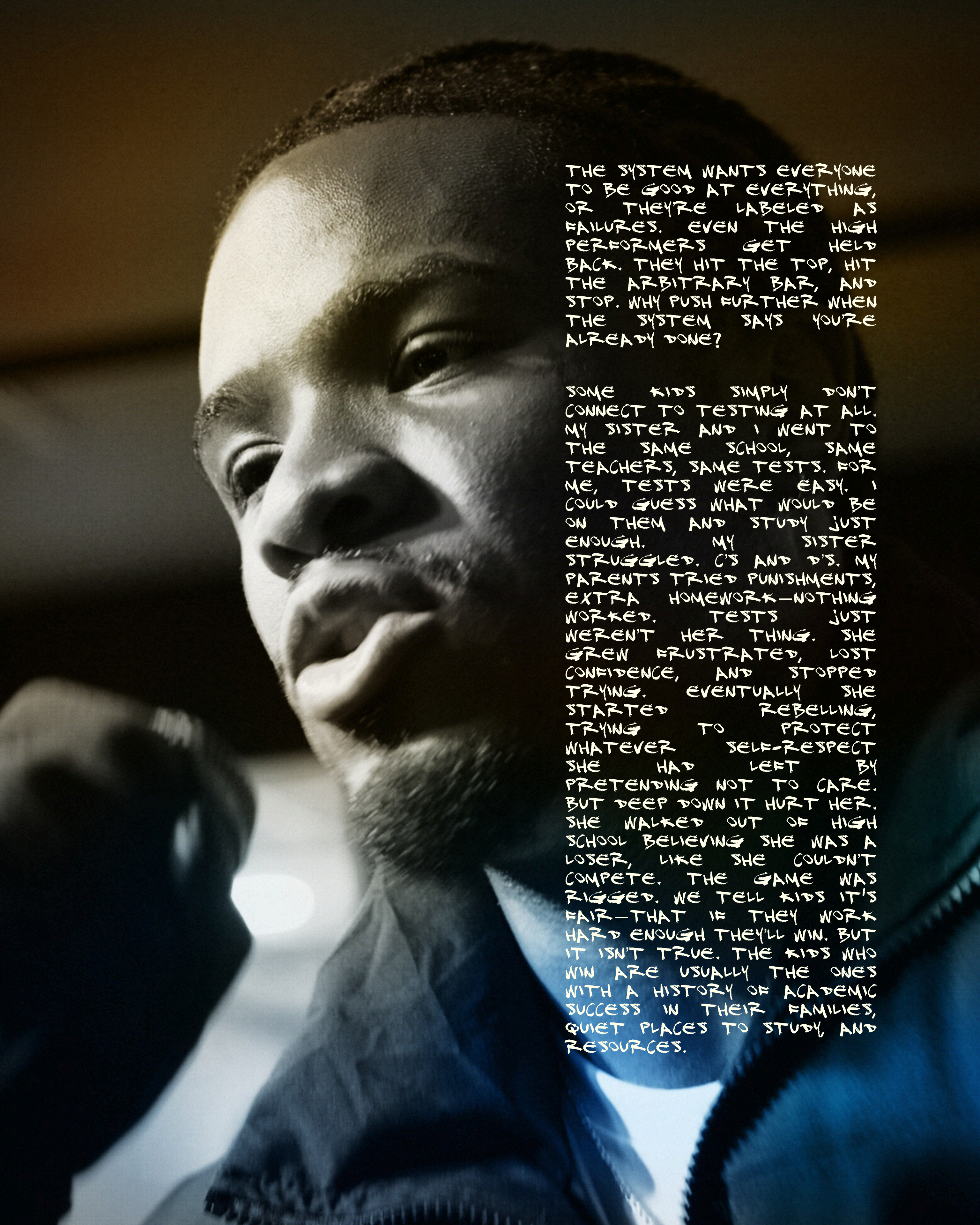
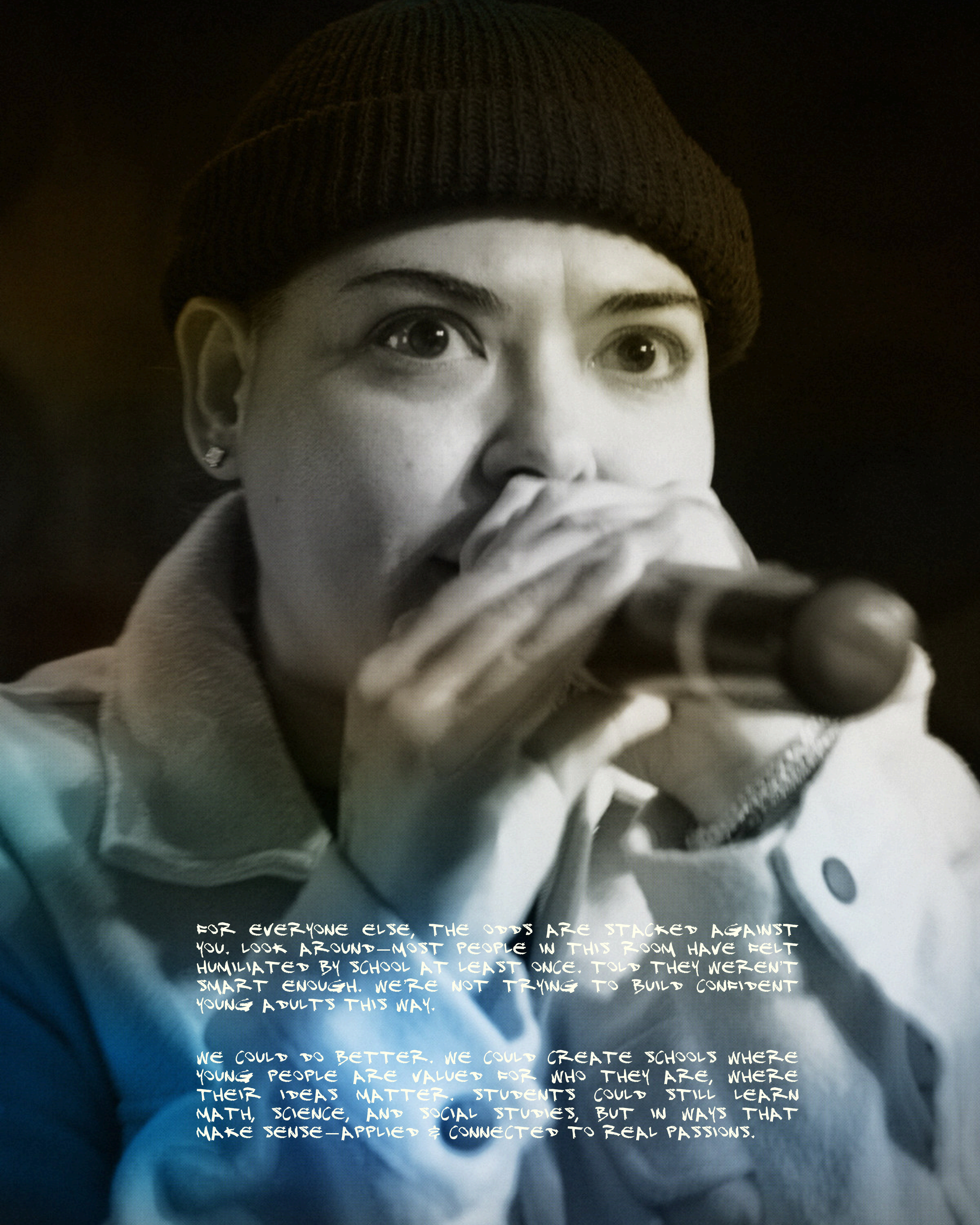
4LEARNING



THE SYSTEM WANTS EVERYONE TO BE GOOD AT EVERYTHING, OR THEY'RE LABELED AS FAILURES. EVEN THE HIGH PERFORMERS GET HELD BACK. THEY HIT THE TOP, HIT THE ARBITRARY BAR, AND STOP. WHY PUSH FURTHER WHEN THE SYSTEM SAYS YOU'RE ALREADY DONE?

SOME KIDS SIMPLY DON'T CONNECT TO TESTING AT ALL. MY SISTER AND I WENT TO THE SAME SCHOOL, SAME TEACHERS, SAME TESTS. FOR ME, TESTS WERE EASY. I COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD BE ON THEM AND STUDY JUST ENOUGH. MY SISTER STRUGGLED. C'S AND D'S. MY PARENTS TRIED PUNISHMENTS, EXTRA HOMEWORK—NOTHING WORKED. TESTS JUST WEREN'T HER THING. SHE GREW FRUSTRATED, LOST CONFIDENCE, AND STOPPED TRYING. EVENTUALLY SHE STARTED REBELLING, TRYING TO PROTECT WHATEVER SELF-RESPECT SHE HAD LEFT BY PRETENDING NOT TO CARE. BUT DEEP DOWN IT HURT HER. SHE WALKED OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL BELIEVING SHE WAS A LOSER, LIKE SHE COULDN'T COMPETE. THE GAME WAS RIGGED. WE TELL KIDS IT'S FAIR—THAT IF THEY WORK HARD ENOUGH THEY'LL WIN. BUT IT ISN'T TRUE. THE KIDS WHO WIN ARE USUALLY THE ONES WITH A HISTORY OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN THEIR FAMILIES, QUIET PLACES TO STUDY, AND RESOURCES.



FOR EVERYONE ELSE, THE ODDS ARE STACKED AGAINST YOU. LOOK AROUND—MOST PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM HAVE FELT HUMILIATED BY SCHOOL AT LEAST ONCE. TOLD THEY WEREN'T SMART ENOUGH. WE'RE NOT TRYING TO BUILD CONFIDENT YOUNG ADULTS THIS WAY.

WE COULD DO BETTER. WE COULD CREATE SCHOOLS WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE VALUED FOR WHO THEY ARE, WHERE THEIR IDEAS MATTER. STUDENTS COULD STILL LEARN MATH, SCIENCE, AND SOCIAL STUDIES, BUT IN WAYS THAT MAKE SENSE—APPLIED & CONNECTED TO REAL PASSIONS.

IF SOMEONE WANTS TO BE A WEB DESIGNER, SOUND ENGINEER, OR ENTREPRENEUR, THEIR CLASSES COULD ALIGN WITH THAT. THEY COULD TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR FUTURE. BUT WHEN I ASK DISTRICTS IF WE CAN EVALUATE PROGRESS WITH SOMETHING OTHER THAN TEST SCORES, I GET THE SAME POMPOUS REPLY: "WE BELIEVE ALL STUDENTS CAN ACHIEVE THE HIGHEST LEVELS. WE WON'T TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT." BUT WHAT'S EASIER THAN ONE TEST FOR EVERY STUDENT? WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT IS ACTUALLY HARD—EDUCATING EACH STUDENT AS AN INDIVIDUAL, GETTING TO KNOW THEM, DISCOVERING WHAT THEY'RE GOOD AT, AND HELPING THEM GROW THOSE SKILLS.

JOHN WOODEN UNDERSTOOD THIS. BEFORE HE WAS A LEGENDARY UCLA COACH, HE WAS A TEACHER. HE HATED GIVING GRADES. HE THOUGHT IT WAS UNFAIR TO RANK STUDENTS AS A, B, C, OR D. SO HE MOVED INTO COACHING, WHERE HE LEARNED THAT SUCCESS COMES FROM VALUING EACH PERSON, RECOGNIZING THEY'RE NOT THE SAME, AND HELPING EACH ONE DEVELOP THEIR UNIQUE STRENGTHS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE TEAM. WHY DON'T WE DO THAT IN SCHOOLS?

AT YOUTHBUILD CHARTER SCHOOL OF CALIFORNIA, TEACHERS AND STUDENTS WORK TOGETHER ON SOCIAL INVESTIGATIONS—REAL ISSUES IN THEIR COMMUNITIES. THEY CHOOSE A SOCIAL JUSTICE TOPIC AND BUILD PROJECTS CONNECTED TO IT. ONE GROUP WORKED ON SHERIFF BRUTALITY IN LA COUNTY JAILS. THEY DID RESEARCH, CREATED A PLAN, CONNECTED WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS, HELD TOWN HALLS, PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, AND EVEN HOSTED A CANDIDATES FORUM FOR THE SHERIFF ELECTION. THEY'RE AIMING TO SERVE ON A CITIZENS OVERSIGHT PANEL.

That's real education—young people owning their learning. And the teachers make sure everything connects to state standards, meeting learning objectives while allowing each student to apply skills in their own way. We're not alone. Other schools around the country are resisting standardized testing, choosing depth over coverage, creativity over compliance, and teachers as coaches rather than taskmasters.

The goal should be healthy, competent, confident adults. But the system we have reinforces negativity, competition, and shame. My sister—the so-called "bad" student—needed support, confidence, and love from the system. She never got it. That lack of confidence over the years spiraled into despair that eventually ended with her taking her own life. I'm not blaming the school system for her death; there were many factors. But if school had been a place of acceptance, trust, guidance, and appreciation for her real gifts—her art, her music, her athleticism, her loyalty — I believe it could've helped her find another path. She had so much potential. It was a tragedy to see it dimmed by a system that couldn't see her.

WE NEED TO RETHINK GRADING. WE NEED TO STOP LETTING ANY STUDENT WALK OUT OF SCHOOL FEELING LIKE A LOSER. WE CAN DO BETTER—FOR ALL OF THEM.

YOU ARE WITNESSING

A REMIX.

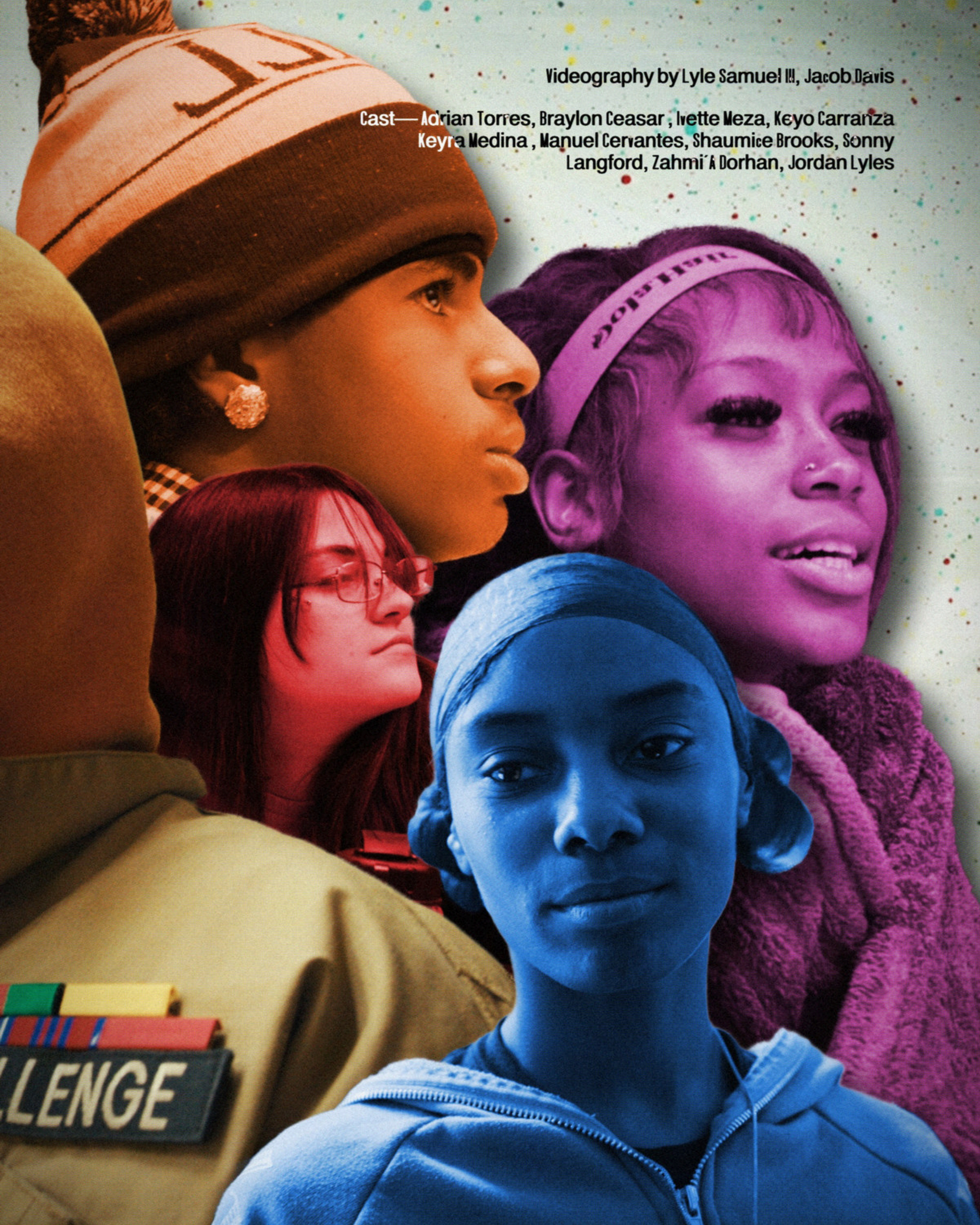
CALI4NIA

Per usual, a class left unattended for one second will cause mayhem to erupt. Sonny steps up, drilling his classmates on which keys to press when trying to Record and Undo. ´R´ to record, Command + Z to take back a slip-up.

In Logic Pro X, these shortcuts are the foundation of the creative process; recording raw ideas, undoing missteps, and building confidence through repetition. Sonny gets everyone in check, holding the class down while the instructor steps away from his students.

— Scan to Watch the Skit.

In association with Four Fingers Magazine, 4Learning, Rising Stars
Business Academy, High School for Recording Arts



Videography by Lyle Samuel III, Jacob Davis

Cast— Adrian Torres, Braylon Ceasar , Ivette Meza, Keyo Carranza
Keyra Medina , Manuel Cervantes, Shaumice Brooks, Sonny
Langford, Zahmi´A Dorhan, Jordan Lyles

" Tomme often talks about his grandmother, Sylvia “Baby Lue” Jones. The woman who taught him how to cook in her West Kingston kitchen. Pimento operates like an extension of the home: recipes she passed down."

AUTHENTIC
PIMENTO

— Tomme Beevas, co-founder and chief strategic officer of Pimento Jamaican Kitchen. Photographed by Nancy Ngo / Pioneer Press)

Business Spotlight

AUTHENTIC
PIMENTO™
EST. 2012
JAMAICAN KITCHEN

Pimento Jamaican Kitchen started small, on purpose. Tomme Beevas, born and raised in Kingston, brought his grandmother's recipes to Minneapolis after years of running a backyard grill that slowly turned into a neighborhood gathering spot. He linked up with his neighbor, Yoni Reinharz, and the two went from hustling out of pop-up tents in 2012 to winning Food Court Wars in 2013. That win gave them a rent-free year in a mall food court; the spark they needed.

In 2016, Pimento opened its flagship on Eat Street at 2524 Nicollet Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55404. From there, they kept building. They added Pimento on the Lake at 3000 E Bde Maka Ska Pkwy, Minneapolis, MN 55408, a lakeside spot that brought their food into one of the city's busiest summer hangouts.

Then came their St. Paul location inside the Keg & Case Food Hall at 354 Wabasha St N, St. Paul, MN 55102, extending their reach across the river and giving the Twin Cities another place to experience real Jamaican flavor.

Tomme wasn't guessing his way through entrepreneurship; he came from the corporate world. Before Pimento, he worked at Cargill overseeing global community engagement. But all the while, he kept grilling, kept feeding people, kept pulling the neighborhood together one plate at a time.The menu is straight to the point and rooted in tradition: jerk chicken, curried goat, oxtail, jerk pork. Their sauces carry their own following too, from the mellow Sweet Onion & Smoked Paprika to the fiery "Kill Dem Wid It!"

Pimento has always been bigger than the food. The Eat Street spot turned into a hub; music nights, dance sessions, hip-hop shows, DJs, community events. It became a place where culture wasn't just served but shared. And when Minneapolis was hurting after George Floyd's death, Tomme kept the doors open, turning the restaurant into a supply and support center for anyone who needed help.

At the heart of Pimento is legacy. Tomme often talks about his grandmother, Sylvia "Baby Lue" Jones; the woman who taught him how to cook in her West Kingston kitchen. Pimento operates like an extension of her home: recipes passed down.

Pimento has opened its space to young artists and students from places like the High School for Recording Arts, giving them a platform to perform, express themselves, and build confidence. That's the kind of thing most restaurants don't bother with; but Pimento does because it's part of who they are.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND ANGER

ANGER TRANSLATOR

You know that moment when someone cuts you off in traffic or says something slick under their breath? That heat in your chest and that pressure building behind your eyes isn't just attitude. That's your brain switching into survival mode. Anger isn't random. It's chemistry, wiring, and instinct all working together like a rowdy family reunion in your head.

First up, there's **the Amygdala**. Think of it like that one cousin who's always the first to react at the cookout. Somebody bumps the table, and before you even notice what happened, they're ready to throw hands. The amygdala's job is to detect threats. Real or imagined, it doesn't care. It just hits the alarm. Once that alarm goes off, the **Hypothalamus** jumps in. That's when mama hears her kids arguing over cereal. She doesn't know who started it, and she doesn't care—all she knows is everybody better get somewhere and *SIT DOWN.....* She's calling the shots now, raising her voice, and getting everybody in line. That's your body doing the same thing—heart racing, muscles tightening, breathing picking up because Mama Hypothalamus just turned breakfast into break - a foot off in yo' behind.

Then, after the chaos, the **Prefrontal Cortex** finally shows up. It's the part of your brain that handles logic and decision-making. It reminds you that maybe punching a wall or sending off that angry text isn't the best idea. But by the time it steps in, the damage might already be done.

When you're angry, your body is like a shaken-up soda can. Your heart races, blood pressure spikes, and your muscles tighten as energy builds up, fizzing and bubbling inside. It's meant to protect you, not hurt you, but if you don't find a way to release it, that pressure can make you explode in the blink of an eye. That same fire can burn you out if you hold onto it too long. Constant anger keeps your cortisol levels high, [Cortisol is like a coach yelling from the sidelines, pushing your body to focus, react, and perform under pressure] If these levels remain too high, you can wear down your immune system, tighten your blood vessels, and stress your heart. Over time, it doesn't just affect your mood—it affects your health.

Anger isn't bad by itself. It's information. It tells you something feels unfair, unsafe, or out of your control. The goal isn't to erase anger but to manage it. When you breathe, pause, or walk it off, you're giving your Prefrontal Cortex a chance to step back in and take control. You're basically saying, "Thanks, Amygdala, I got it from here."

MALACHI CLARK - WELLS

Malachi:
I got a habit of talking trash.

Jordan:
Yeah. What you be saying?

Malachi:
Yeah. You garbage. You suck. You a**. Trash. Doodoo.

Jordan:
All right, what's the scenario?

Malachi:
Basketball. Like, just when I lose in basketball, I don't like losing. So I just start—what's it called—dehuman… yeah, dehumanizing my opponent. My peers. My opponents.

Jordan:
Right, right. So you can still express what you feel, but in a better way.

Malachi:
Oh, right. I can say like, "You suck, but good game" but I can say it as a joke. Or we could shake hands or laugh about it or something.

Jordan:
Ay. I can respect it.

ELLY FRANKLIN

Elly:
Basically, when I'm angry, I don't like to express my emotions in the best way. I just say it's fine, or I say "what." I tell them like, shut the **** up. And I get really angry and I destroy things sometimes. I feel like to be better, I should just have an actual conversation instead of shutting them out and being silent.

Jordan:
Uh, yeah. Okay. Okay, so let's take the phrase "I'm gonna just say shut up."

Elly:
Yeah.

Jordan:
Let's take that phrase and reword it. You can still say the same thing, but how can you say it in a different tone?

Elly:
Um… I don't want to say "be quiet." I don't know, like, a nicer way—maybe "Can you give me a moment?"

Jordan:
See, if you said that to me, I'd give you that moment.

Elly:
Because I'm the type of person that needs to think about the situation that just happened. I can't immediately talk about it. I need my space to just be by myself and think.

DREYONNA SMITH

Jordan:
All right, I'm gonna give you a scenario. I stepped on your shoes. What you gonna say?

Dreyonna:
Do I know you, or we just random?

Jordan:
No, just random.

Dreyonna:
Why the **** is you stepping on my shoes? So, you're not gonna say nothing—you're just gonna keep walking?

Jordan:
Now, how do you express the same emotion in a more civil way?

Dreyonna:
Um, you stepped on my shoe. Can you apologize? I don't know… what, I'm supposed to ask them to apologize for stepping on my shoes?

Jordan:
How you gon' keep the peace?

Dreyonna:
Excuse me, you stepped on my shoe. And then I would hope they'd say, "Oh, I'm sorry." So then we could be nice.

Jordan:
That's a step in the right direction. Pun intended

SON DE QUERDAS

Harp On This

PHOTOGRAPHED by JORDAN LYLES

OCTOBER 20TH, 2025

ADA TZAB on THE SUZUKI HARP & AMOS LUCIDI on PIANO

PER4MANCES

Son de Cuerdas are an ensemble that bridges cultures through Western classical music, making it accessible to general audiences. The musicians combine the sounds of cello, harp and piano, presenting Western classical repertoire with an emphasis on Latin American composers, highlighting their combination of folkloric elements with the academic tradition.

Ada & Amos paid HSRA a visit and rendered an intimate performance for the young people: Scan the QR code to view the performance.

Ada explain the origins of 'Son De Querdas' to students at High School for Recording Arts.

"We first got our name because the instruments in this ensemble were originally all string instruments — mainly the harp. In the beginning, we also had a cello. Now, we're opening up to include two more instruments. We've been collaborating with players of the flute, trombone, and probably percussion. But the two of us are still the core of the group. We focus our music on promoting Latin American repertoire, since I'm from Mexico — specifically, from the region of Yucatán.

What you just heard was a piece by a Spanish composer named Lucas Ruiz de Ribayaz, written around the 1600s. He composed it after spending a long time in Peru. After the Spanish brought their music and instruments to the Americas, both the instruments and the music began to evolve in new ways — shaped by Indigenous traditions and the influences of African people brought to the continent.

The piece we just played was called a Tarantella, which is based on an Italian dance. It's usually fast, but this one begins slowly and gradually builds in tempo.

AMOS:

Okay, so now we're jumping forward in time with Piel Canela. This is a bolero, a slower, romantic dance style, and this song comes from Puerto Rico.

Now, I think I should explain something — because many of you probably expected to see our full ensemble, including the cellist. As Ada mentioned, we usually perform with a cello, and that's probably how you were first introduced to our group. But over the weekend, we learned that our cellist wasn't able to join us for this presentation. So, we've rearranged many of our pieces for just piano and harp. Sometimes unexpected things happen, but we thought it would still be nice to share our music with you — and it's also a great chance for you to experience a less common instrument: the harp.

Up next, Ada will tell you more about the harp — it has a fascinating history in the Americas.

ADA:

So, the harp's story in the Americas begins with the arrival of the Spanish. They brought many things — not all of them good — but one of the beautiful things they brought was music and their instruments.

What's really fascinating is how people in different Latin American countries adapted the harp, reshaping it according to their own musical traditions. Over time, countries like Paraguay, Venezuela, Colombia, and Mexico developed strong harp traditions.

Each region's harp is slightly different — in how it's built, how it feels, and how it's played.

Now, the harp you see here is called a pedal harp or concert harp — the kind you'd see in a symphony orchestra. It's the largest type, with 47 strings and seven pedals at the bottom.

Right now, the harp is tuned like the white keys of a piano — basically a C major scale. But unlike a piano, I don't have separate black keys for sharps and flats.

To solve that, someone (I believe a French inventor) created this system of pedals. Each pedal controls all the strings of one pitch. For example, the red strings are all C's, and they're connected to this middle pedal here.When I pull the pedal all the way up, the string is loose — that's C-flat. If I press the pedal down one notch, small discs on the neck tighten the string slightly, raising it to C natural. If I press it down another notch, it becomes C-sharp.

So, each string can produce three different notes. When I play, I often set the pedals ahead of time, but sometimes I have to change them while performing.

Some composers even use the pedals for sound effects — like special vibrations or percussive noises.

Photographed by Jordan Lyles

HISTORY OF THE SOUNDS OF BLACKNESS

The history of the Sounds of Blackness began in 1969 as the Macalester College Black Voices, founded by Russell Knighton at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. Gary Hines took over as director in 1971, officially renaming the group Sounds of Blackness. Inspired by Duke Ellington, the group was founded with the mission to perform all forms of Black music, a vision that continues today.

If you've ever heard Optimistic blasting in the background of a family cookout, or a church picnic— you've met Sounds of Blackness. You just didn't know it.

They didn't come out of Los Angeles, New York, or Atlanta — they came out of Minnesota. The land of 10,000 lakes and 9,999 confused looks when people found out this Grammy-winning gospel-funk-jazz-reggae group came from there.

When Gary Hines took over, he told everyone, "We're not just singing gospel. We're singing every sound that came from us."

And he meant everything. Gospel. Blues. Ragtime. Hip-hop. Reggae. That was their mission — to represent all of Black music, not just the church-approved version.

Now, this wasn't your average college choir. They were serious about educating people on Black culture, history, and the soul that birthed it all. They performed everywhere — prisons, schools, embassies, even the White House. (Which had to be a trip: standing there singing "Optimistic" in front of people who probably never sat next to them on a bus.)

In 1991, they dropped The Evolution of Gospel, produced by Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, and hit the world with Optimistic. Over the decades, they've won Grammys, Stellar Awards, Image Awards — but more importantly, they stayed themselves. Never chased trends, just carried truth. They remind you that Black music ain't a genre, it's a genealogy. It's the sound of survival.

Gary Hines was born in Yonkers, New York — the kind of place where you either learn rhythm or learn to duck. His mother, Doris Hines, was a jazz singer, so music wasn't optional; it was the air in the house. While other kids were playing tag, Gary was probably matching pitch to the hum of the refrigerator.

When he was 12, the family moved to Minnesota — a cultural left turn if there ever was one. He said it was a shock. "Everybody was blond," he joked once. But he didn't run from it. He absorbed it, saw what was missing, and started building something that felt like home.

As Gary grew into his calling, he wasn't just a conductor; he was a coach, a historian, and a therapist with a keyboard. He pushed singers to know where their sound came from. He'd drop names like Langston Hughes and Sister Rosetta Tharpe mid-rehearsal, as if that was normal conversation. "You can't sing freedom songs if you don't know who wrote them," he'd say. He taught with love, but he didn't play. Picture a man with perfect pitch and a preacher's patience, except when the tenors got lazy. That's Gary.

Under his leadership, Sounds of Blackness went from college choir to Grammy stage. They worked with Prince, Quincy Jones, Stevie Wonder, Usher, and the duo Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, who helped bring their sound to the mainstream without watering it down.

Despite all the success, Gary never got Hollywood about it. He stayed in Minneapolis. Still running rehearsals. Still doing community work. I had the honor of documenting one of those rehearsals.

— Article by ***Jordan Lyles***

TWIN CITIES R!SE x SOUNDS OF BLACKNESS—

Founded in 1993, back when flannel shirts and pagers were hot, Twin Cities Rise has been quietly rebuilding people from the inside out—especially those who've been overlooked, counted out, or left behind. Not just teaching résumés, but renewing self-worth. Because if you don't believe in yourself, no job in the world's gonna fix that.

Now, enter **Jim Burau;** the marketing guy with the humility of a stagehand but the vision of a director. Jim's the type who doesn't need the spotlight; he's too busy aiming it towards others. He's been part of Twin Cities R!SE for years, helping the organization tell stories.

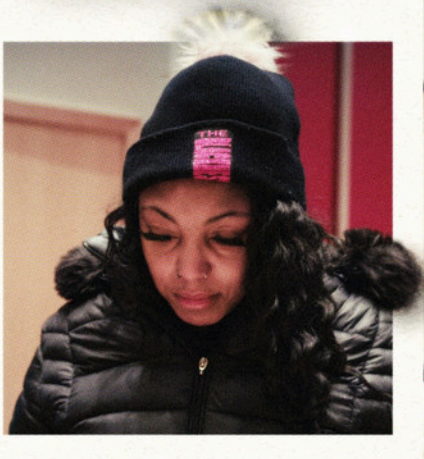
One day, Jim had the idea—"What if we soundtracked the mission?" Not a jingle, not a commercial, but something that felt like the people. So he reached out to Gary Hines and the legendary Sounds of Blackness, together, they produced "Twin Cities Rise". I sat behind the camera witnessing the creation of this masterpiece.

Jim didn't need to step to the mic; he just built the bridge that made it all possible. While Gary conducted the singers, Jim handled the story, making sure the delivery of the music complimented the vision of the record.

The choir's harmonies bounced off the walls in the live room and I caught it all on camera.

Scan the QR code to view the session—

THE SOUNDS OF BLACKNESS



YELLOW ROSES

On October 20th, Yellow Roses Headlined at Pillar Forum for an intimate crowd.

Photographed by Khloe Kruchowski & Jordan Lyles

Scan the QR code to view the live performance.

YELLOW ROSES + THE LAMELLAS | LIVE AT PILLAR FORUM IN MINNEAPOLIS, MN

A SHADE OF BLUE

Delta Blues comes out of the Mississippi Delta, and it's straightforward. A voice, a guitar, a slide, and whatever someone was going through that day. It wasn't about technique. It was about making a statement. The music came from what most would say, 'the soul'. As cliche as it sounds, it did. It came from long humid days, repeated losses, and small wins. It wasn't made for charts or studios. It was made because people needed a way to get things out.

— Scan to watch the rehearsal.

— Scan to watch the performance.

IF IT WASN'T FILMED, IT DIDN'T HAPPEN

Artist, Tazz on the turntables, ***The Residency***

October. 2025

UNCUT FOOTAGE
STUDENT SHOWCASE

Did you know that videographers charge extra to send raw footage? Yeah. And not because they're trying to hustle you — it's because that footage is massive. We're talking hundreds of gigabytes, sometimes over half a terabyte. You can't just drop 592GB in a Gmail thread like you're sending a selfie. People think raw footage is like grabbing fries from the bag; just reach in and hand it over. No sirree, Bob! It's work. Organizing, backing it up, labeling every clip so you don't get a folder full of "MOV_00982" that all look the same. Then compressing it. Then finding somewhere big enough to even hold the files. And nowadays every cloud service has a subscription fee.

So when a videographer says, "Sure, I can send the raw footage, but it's an additional fee," they're not taxing you. They're charging for time, labor, storage, bandwidth, and the stress of praying the Wi-Fi doesn't quit halfway through a 23-hour upload. And while we're here, let me put you on game: Some videographers delete footage after a certain time. Not because they're petty, but because storage ain't infinite and creativity takes space. Hard drives fill up. New projects come in. Old footage gets archived, then un-archived, then buried, then finally deleted. So if you want your raw files, don't wait. Buy it while it's in stock. This ain't Amazon. Once it's gone, it's gone-gone.

But not in this case...

Here's some uncut footage.

— Watch the Documentary
Still Standing

Power Speaks Louder was founded in 2016 by B. Hunter in Moreno Valley, California to support underserved communities, including youth in crisis, low-income families, and people experiencing homelessness. From the start, PSL has built programs to meet different needs through outreach, support, and creative expression. The organization provides regular free food distributions through its "Free Food Drive-Thru," offering perishable and non-perishable food and basic goods, and runs a street outreach program for homeless people, distributing lunches and essentials across Moreno Valley and Riverside County. PSL launched a "Who Cares? We Do!" Bus Campaign, converting a donated commercial bus into a mobile outreach vehicle to deliver food and essentials throughout the community. PSL also created the documentary ***Still Standing***, directed and produced by B. Hunter. The film follows people who have faced homelessness and hardship and allows them a platform to speak on what they've lived through. The production team includes Terayle Hill as a consulting producer, Dorian Armstead as camera operator, and Jordan Lyles as director of photography, camera operator, editor, and music composer. The documentary and PSL's outreach programs together highlight the experiences of those who are often overlooked.

ARES...

HOME IS WHERE THE ART IS.

I had 2 fears as a kid. Not regular ones like spiders, or monsters under the bed. I had very specific fears. One of those fears was becoming homeless. I'm not sure why it stuck with me the way it did, but it stayed on my mind. I used to tell my dad these detailed survival plans, like I was preparing for a future I couldn't explain. I'd say if I ever ended up on the street, I'd sleep in the slide at the park, wash up in the fountain, ask people for a dollar to get food. At the same time, I carried this fear of getting older. When I turned ten, I cried alone in the living room because the thought of hitting double digits made everything feel heavier. Growing up felt like stepping closer to responsibility, and even closer to death. Me and my dad joke now that maybe I lived before, because as a kid I used to always say I was from the '70s, that I was a homeless man who was in a bad car accident, pointing to a birthmark on my left side as proof in my mind. It sounds wild now, but all of it came from trying to make sense of fears I didn't have the words for yet.

As I got older, I realized those early fears weren't random. They shaped the way I see people and the world around me. While working on a documentary called ***Still Standing,*** I started noticing how many things we can take for granted, especially having a place to call home. When your housing is stable, you don't think about whether you'll have access to a restroom, a clean place to shower, fresh clothes, or even privacy when getting dressed. You don't question where you'll put your medicine or whether it will be safe. A simple headache is something you treat with rest. For people who don't have housing, those moments become complicated.

A bathroom isn't guaranteed and a shower might be days away. Changing clothes might mean doing it outside, hoping no one bothers you. Food becomes unpredictable. Rest becomes something you chase instead of something you look forward to at the end of the day. And safety, which most people don't even think about, becomes a constant concern.

To understand it for a moment, imagine waking up on a cold morning after barely sleeping on a bench or sharing space in a crowded shelter. Your clothes are wrinkled or damp, your back hurts, and before you can think about any plans for the day, you have to figure out where you can use a restroom. You think about food next, and how to stretch whatever you can find. Every decision becomes a trade-off. Something as simple as running an errand becomes complicated if you don't have an ID, an address, or a place to keep your belongings safe. As the day goes on you might get a meal somewhere, but it might not be enough. You keep walking, not because you want to but because you can't stay in one place too long. When evening comes, you start searching for a spot to sleep, hoping it's safe and that no one will bother you. The consistent uncertainty wears you down mentally and physically. It becomes harder to stay motivated. The mix of fear, exhaustion, numbness, shame, and loneliness all builds up and follows you into the next day.

People often carry misconceptions about homelessness, and these myths shape the way society responds. It is common for people to assume homeless individuals are lazy, but the truth is that surviving without stable housing requires constant work. Another assumption is that most homeless individuals struggle with addiction, but many do not, and for those who do, it is usually connected to trauma or instability rather than the cause of their housing situation.

Many also believe homelessness is a personal choice. In reality, people lose housing because of job loss, medical bills, evictions, rising rents, or family conflict. The reasons are often bigger than one person's decision making.

Now, we know homelessness anywhere is unfortunate, but imagine dealing with all of this in a state as cold as Minnesota.

Minnesota's homelessness data reflects these realities. On any given night, roughly 8,400 to 9,200 people are experiencing homelessness, either in shelters or with no shelter at all. A broader count in 2023 found 10,522 people homeless on a single night. Behind each number is someone trying to pull their life back together in the middle of uncertainty. About one-third of Minnesotans experiencing homelessness aren't in shelters at all. That means thousands of people are sleeping in cars, outside, in abandoned buildings, or on someone's couch hoping they won't wear out their welcome.

Families make up a large part of the picture. Nearly half of all people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota are parents with children, trying to keep their kids fed and warm. There's also a growing number of older adults losing housing. Adults aged 55 and older saw a 7 percent increase compared to 2018, which means more seniors are facing nights without a safe place to sleep. And even these numbers miss people who don't show up in official counts, the ones bouncing between friends' homes or temporary situations because they have nowhere else to go.

When you look at it this way, the statistics stop feeling like data points and start feeling like lives in motion, each person trying to stay afloat in a system that makes it far too easy to fall through the cracks.

I can't help but notice something else too, something people don't talk about often. There's a kind of creativity you see among people experiencing homelessness that most of the world overlooks; or maybe people do notice, I will not speak so broadly. Furthermore, it's the ability to make something out of nothing, to use whatever is in front of you and turn it into a shelter, a tool, a system, a solution. It's the way someone can take cardboard, tarps, rope, blankets, and scraps and build a space that gives them even a little bit of privacy or protection. These makeshift homes might not look like much to everyone else walking by, but when you pay attention, you see design, intention, problem-solving. You see people figuring out how to stay dry in the rain, how to block wind, how to create warmth, how to protect what little they have. There's creativity in survival, in rearranging the world just enough to keep going.

And then there's kindness. Even in hard circumstances, people still share food, still look out for each other, still hold conversations with gentleness. It's easy to assume homelessness pulls people into bitterness or isolation, but so many hold on to pieces of themselves that are warm and generous. They still choose to be human in a world that often treats them like they're invisible.

The signs people hold up are their own kind of self expression. Some call it desperation, some assume what they'll use the money for, but when you actually read the signs, you see personality; humor and pain. The handwriting, the words they choose, the scraps of cardboard they find; it's all art. Some signs make you smile, some stop you in your tracks. They're a form of art, not in the polished gallery sense, but in the human sense. They're raw and real, shaped by whatever someone had access to and whatever they needed to say in that moment.

— article by ***Jordan Lyles***

— scan for ***Free Housing Resources***

spotlight

Moriah Anderson

Personality

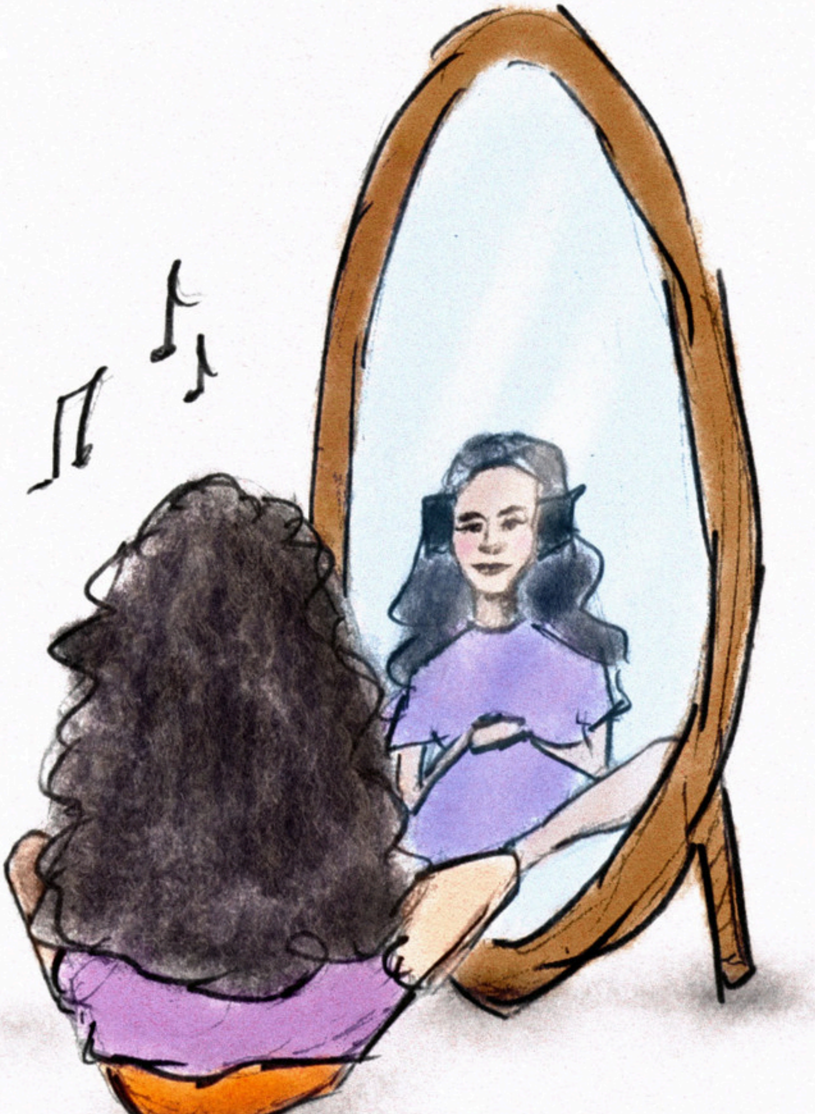
Moriah dances. She sings. She smiles. She has hair .. a lot. One may say she is a witty + relatable jokester who can have you laughing. She's juggling a million projects at once. She hasn't eaten today but don't worry, she will when she gets home. She wears her boyfriend's sweater because he goes to a different school and she misses him. Moriah moves through life one step at a time. Or better yet .. one dance step at a time.

moriah anderson ☺

When I first seen Moriah, I immediately identified a young person who is doing the thing that will likely open many doors for her. She's someone that forces her hand to get comfortable being uncomfortable. The thought of breaking into dance out of the blue may bring about natural nerves, but inwardly there's no such thing as *being nervous* for her.

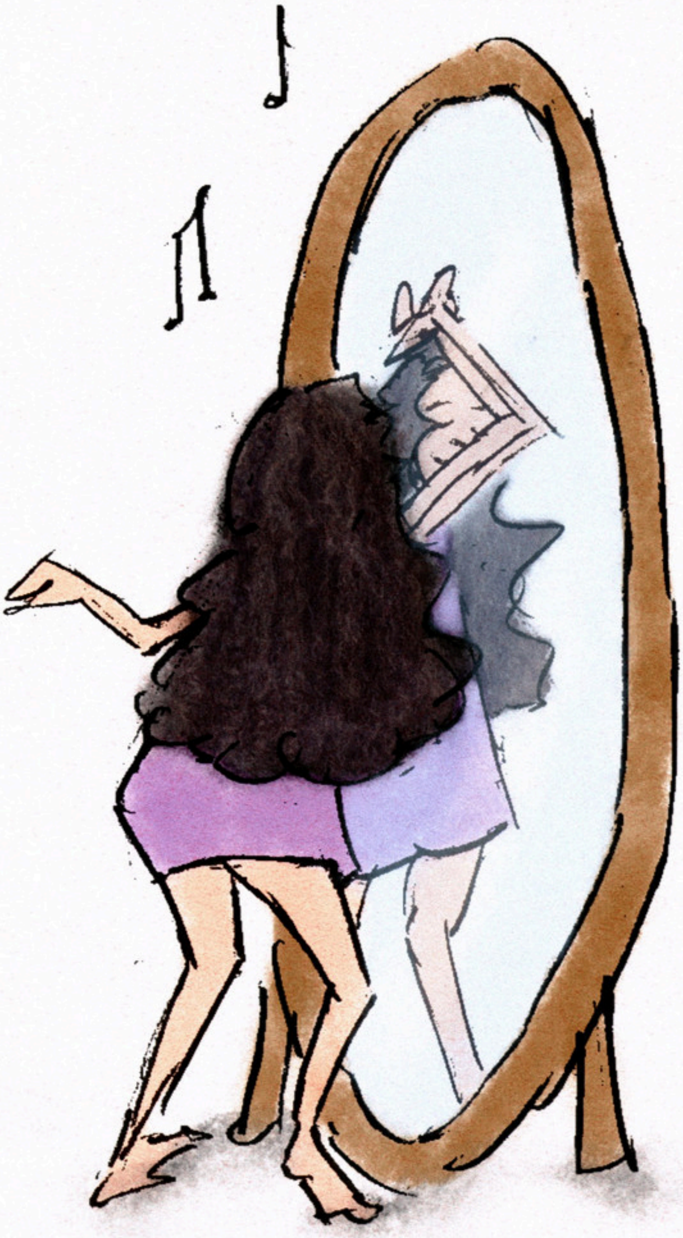
We can't always help how our body reacts to the moment, whether it be hands shaking, cotton mouth, even that annoying cold chill that causes teeth to chatter; but when you're made for the moment, all things go according to not the plan, but according to the hours behind closed doors practicing.

Moriah is a K-pop lover, a choreographer, and a freestyle dancer. She is an artist in many other facets, but today we'll focus on her steps. Not just the steps she dances, but the steps that lead up to her pursuit of the art of dancing.

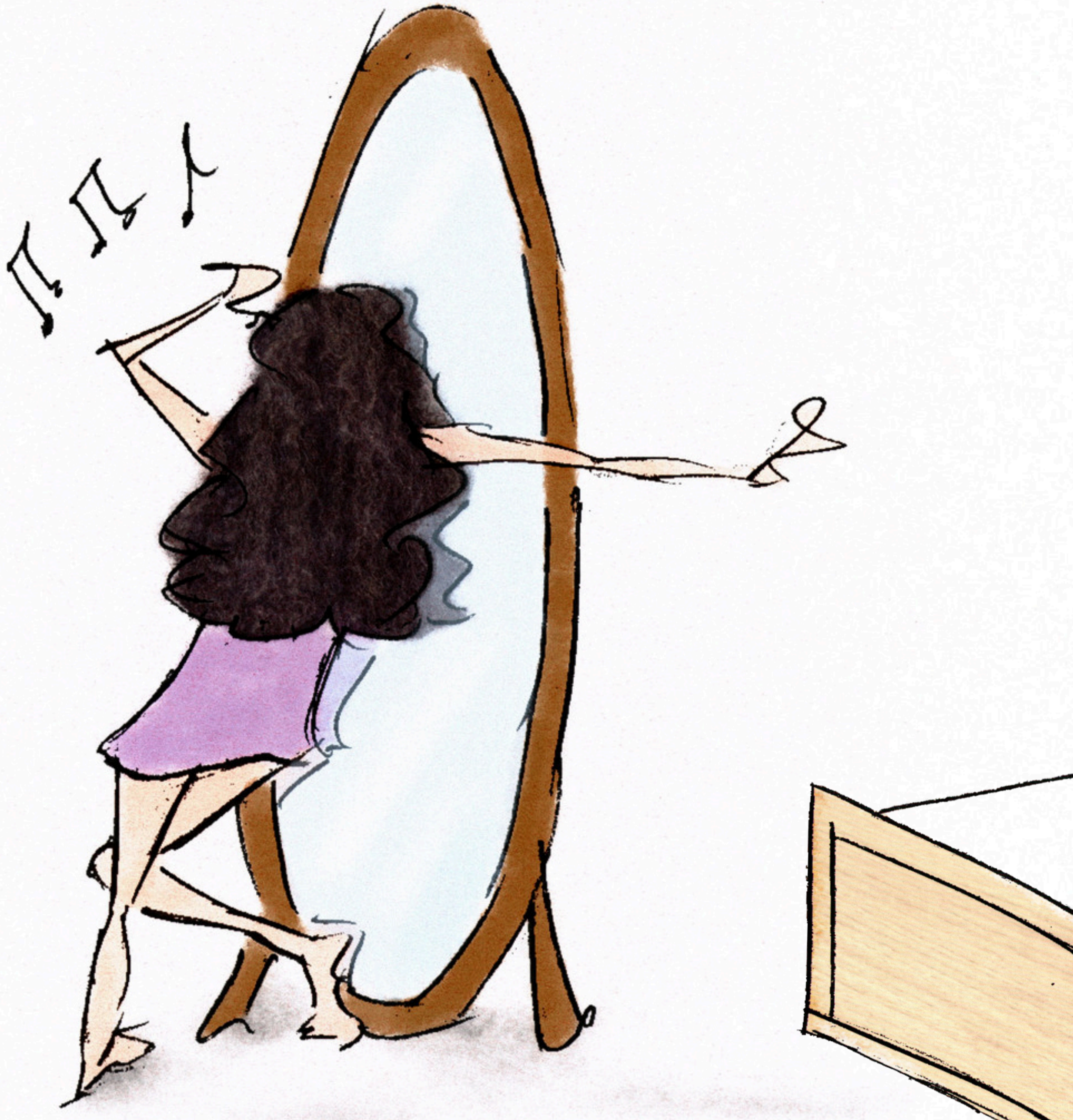


I remember being in my bedroom. I had a mirror and I had just finished cleaning my room. I had my headphones on, and I was like—

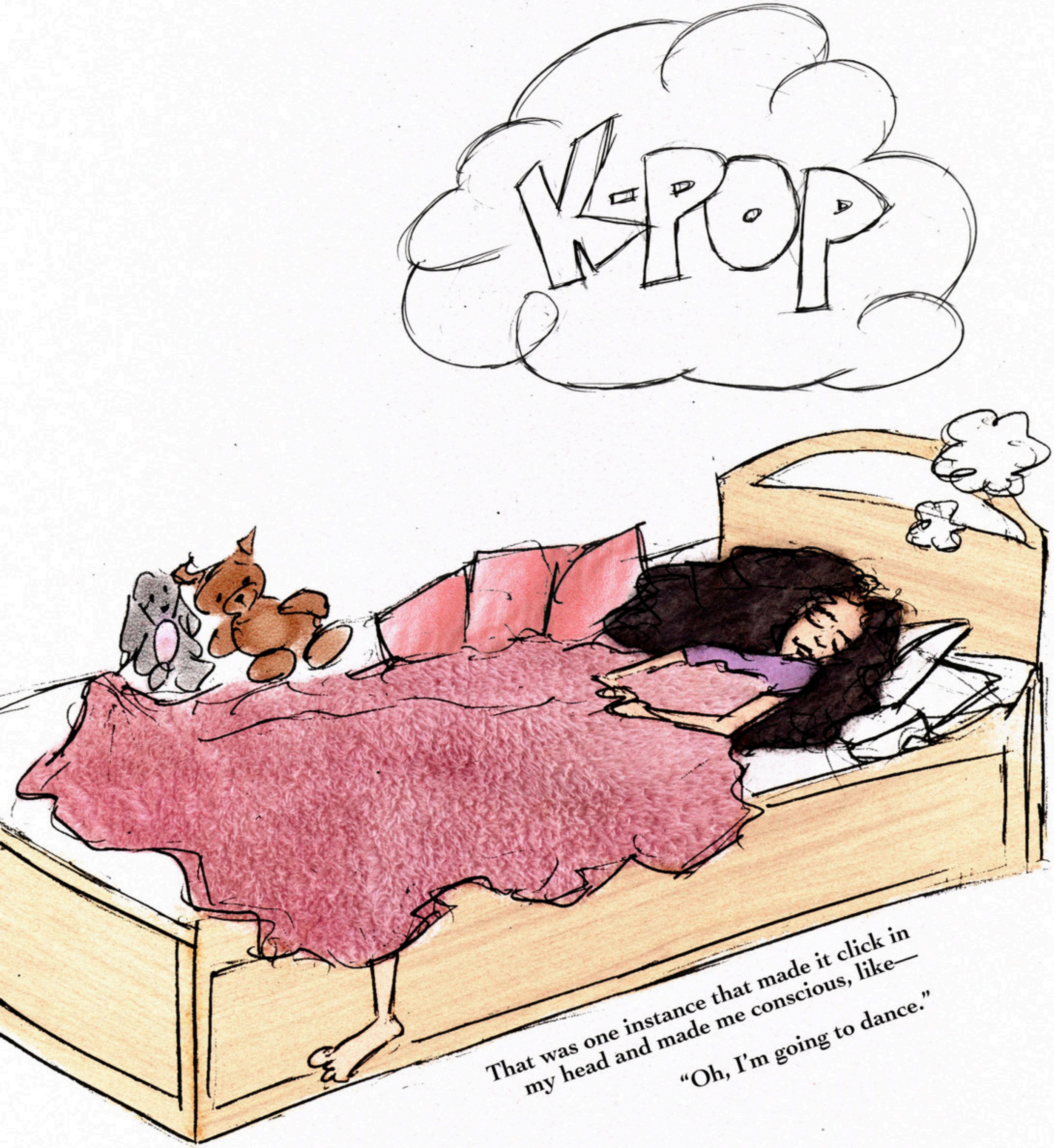
“Wait, this song’s kind of… oooh! makes me want to bust a move”



So, I started busting a move...



And I was like, "Wait, I'm kind of good at this."



That was one instance that made it click in my head and made me conscious, like—

"Oh, I'm going to dance."

illustrated·by *Jordan Lyles*

—Four Fingers Magazine, Issue #1 Based on Moriah Anderson's Interview

INTERVIEW

Moriah Anderson

Interviewed on September 2nd, 2025

Moriah Anderson
Born August 26th, 2008

17 years and 7 days old.
204 months and 7 days,
888 weeks, or 6,216 days,
149,184 hours,
8,951,040 minutes,
537,062,400 seconds.

Jordan: First and foremost, your first and last name, please.

Moriah: Hellooo, my name is Moriah Anderson.

Jordan: Okay. What's up. What stood out to me right away is how fearless you seemed when you got up to perform. It's the first day of school, you don't know anybody, yet you had no nerves, no hesitation. By observation, I can tell it's what you do and love, but a lot of people could feel closed in or awkward in scenarios like that, especially with a crowd of a few and to be asked to perform out of the blue. You didn't show any sign of nerves. So, with that, I want to know where your brain goes when the opportunity to show what you have to offer comes about.

Moriah: I think the first thing that happens is I get this massive adrenaline rush, and that clears out any negative thoughts, any doubts like, *"No, they're gonna hate it. I suck."* The adrenaline kind of fixes that. I also just really love performing. I've been dancing in choreography for about a decade, and performing for half a decade. With experience comes a level of confidence. So, I think that's... yeah—and that was freestyle, not saying that in a boastful way, but I specialize in freestyling.

Jordan: Whaaat?! You lying! That's what's up.

Moriah: That was also—not my best. Like, that was so bad. I'm almost a little embarrassed, but, um... that was not good. And you know what? That's okay. And that's okay because you can't be perfect all the time.

Jordan: Exactly. But from our perspective, it was great. Anyhow, let's go back a little. I want you to take me to a memory—wait.. before I ask the question, if I was to say, "What was the first time you wore perfume?" I want you to be descriptive. The scent you smelled on your mom. Where were you? How did the room look?

Moriah: Okay, I can do that.

Jordan: When's your first memory—not of dancing yourself—but seeing something that sparked the thought to dance?

Moriah: I never really had a visual inspiration for dancing at first. I kind of just did it. But my first real visual inspiration was K-pop.

Jordan: I see.

Moriah: I don't know if you know much about K-pop, but they have, like, intense choreography. I saw that, and I was already dancing for a bit when I was introduced to K-pop, which was about five years ago, so around 2020, 2021. I saw TWICE—a girl group, TWICE. Everyone loves them, everyone knows them. They're great, and they're amazing dancers. I remember seeing their choreography to the song *Fancy*, *TT*, and I think *I Can't Stop Me*... maybe, I think. And also *What Is Love?* All of the choreography was absolutely amazing and visually stunning. Seeing that, I was very intrigued and was like, *"Okay, I'm learning that. I'm learning how to do that."* And five years later, here I am.

Jordan: Ok, great. How did you first fall in love with dance?

Moriah: Okay, this is going to be a long answer. I'm going to tell you that right now.

Jordan: By all means, no rush.

Moriah: I remember being in my bedroom. I had a mirror on my closet door, like a full-body mirror. I had just finished cleaning my room, had my headphones on, and I was like, *"Wait, this song's kind of… ooooh, makes me want to bust a move"* So I started busting a move, and I was like, ***"Wait, I'm kind of good at this."*** That was one instance that made it click in my head, made me conscious, like, *"Oh, I'm going to dance."* But before it kind of clicked. It was…again in my bedroom, but I didn't have a mirror in this bedroom. I didn't have my iPad for whatever reason, so I couldn't play music, but I had a radio. I would play KTIS, and I remember how they play the same 10 songs over and over again. I would wait for the songs I liked to dance to, and I would get up and like, 'Ayyyy*!*' I'd hit a little shimmy. And the thing is, I would freestyle. I would create choreography based on my freestyle. If I did a sequence that I liked, I'd practice it, memorize it, and keep it in my back pocket to use in the future.

Jordan: Earlier you mentioned growing up in a Christian household, were there any stipulations or restrictions against dancing, or was it accepted?

Moriah: I'm mixed. My dad is white and very Christian; my mom is Black. My mom was encouraging—she wanted us to know rhythm and feel music. My dad's side had their ways, so I didn't always feel safe or comfortable being my true self. They didn't know I danced until I got really good. That was around fourth to sixth grade.

Jordan: So you were 'bout 9, 10, 11, or 12.

Moriah: Sounds about right.

Jordan: So almost everybody has their thing, but a lot of people also have their *other* thing, outside of their thing. For me, it's riding my bike. Outside of dance, what's a simple pleasure that keeps you grounded and gets you through life?

Moriah: Swinging…. Playground swings—not the other kind. [laughs] I have autism and ADHD, so swinging is big for me. That back-and-forth motion lets my mind quiet down and focus. I'll swing for hours, listening to music with detailed production—like Tame Impala, PinkPantheress, or Melanie Martinez.

Jordan: How would you describe living with autism?

Moriah: I was bullied a lot in high school—for being Black, queer, autistic, or just myself. I was recently diagnosed, so it's still fresh. Living with autism in a neurotypical world feels like being in *Get Out*. You know you experience things differently, so you feel like you're going insane sometimes. You learn to mimic other people and observe yourself to adjust, which takes so much mental energy. People often think it's "quirky," but that underestimates how much energy it takes to navigate life like this.

Jordan: When you got diagnosed, was it like an 'Ohhhh' moment and did it make certain things make sense to you? Or did you question it a little?

Moriah: Both. At first, I thought, *"Yes, that's me."* But then I overthought things—like, *"I do this that doesn't seem autistic—maybe I don't have it?"* I'm resilient, so sometimes I downplay it, and question if I really have it. But then, I see traits that match me perfectly. It's confirming but also confusing.

Jordan: Understandable. Last question—why the gray hoodie today?

Moriah: It's my boyfriend's. He goes to a different school, and I won't see him until Friday. I'm wearing it in memory of him. [laughs]

Jordan: Amazing. [laughs] I hope that was a good set of questions, and I appreciate you. Thank you kindly.

Moriah: No, thank *you*.

moriah
anderson

MORIAH THE...

Let's talk about the science behind this. I like to break things down scientifically because when you know what's really going on, you can really appreciate it. Moriah is capapble of freestyle dancing. Most dancers are great at choreographed routines because they can rehearse, but freestyling means thinking, reacting, and creating simultaneously. Freestyle isn't just moving your body. It's your brain and your body receiving signals from the music and in a split second being able to react to those signals. Now we gon' go ahead and go Bill Nye here. Her motor cortex is telling her muscles what to do. The motor cortex is like the DJ of your body. It's sitting at the control table, sending signals to every muscle, telling them exactly when to move, how fast, and how smooth. Her cerebellum keeps her balanced and coordinated. The word cerebellum comes from Latin. Its root is "cerebrum," which means brain. The suffix "-ellum" means 'little', so cerebellum literally means "little brain." It's called the little brain because it sits underneath the main brain and helps with balance, coordination, and fine motor control. And her prefrontal cortex is like the coach in her head, calling plays on the fly and making split-second decisions so she can freestyle with control, finesse, and of course, style.

Every pop, spin, and step is a choice made in real time. To understand how that science actually would look, that's like playing chess while running a marathon and the board keeps moving.

Her brain not only aligns herself but it syncs to the beat too. The basal ganglia keeps her locked in with the tempo. The term basal ganglia also comes from Latin. Basal means at the base or bottom, referring to its location deep in the brain. Ganglia means a cluster of nerve cells or a knot, basically a group of neurons working together. Put together, basal ganglia literally means a cluster of nerve cells at the base of the brain. It is responsible for coordinating movement, rhythm, and habits, which is why it is key for things like freestyle dancing. Mix that with the dopamine that hits her system, and everything feels natural. However, that *natural* comes from hours practicing behind closed doors.

Watching Moriah dance is watching science. *Moriah* The Scientist? No relation to Mariah.

DON'T THINK TWICE

Don't Think Twice
DON'T THINK TWICE

K-pop started making noise in the early nineties with groups like Seo Taiji and Boys, mixing hip-hop, techno, and dance into something new.

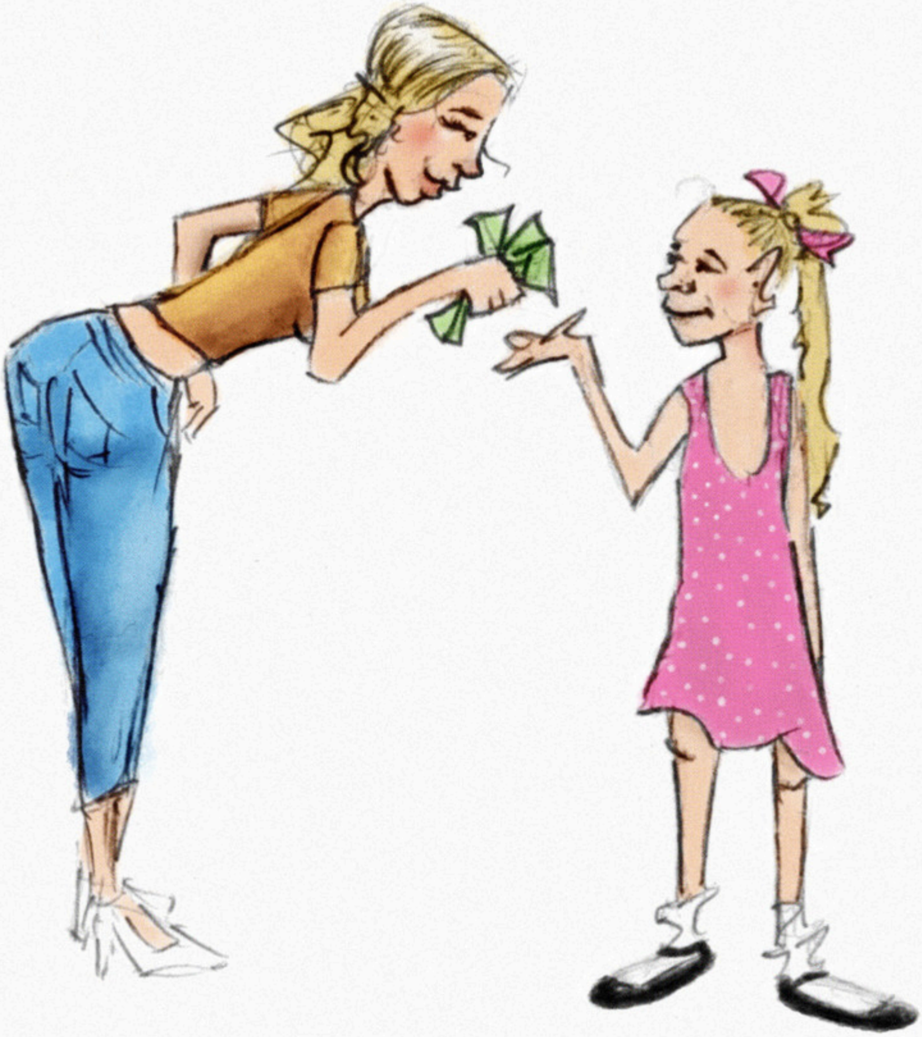
Over time it grew with groups like H.O.T., Girls' Generation, Big Bang, and now global acts like BTS, BLACKPINK, and TWICE.

Moriah has studied moves from groups like TWICE. She takes that precision and discipline and flips it with freestyle, adding her own touch.

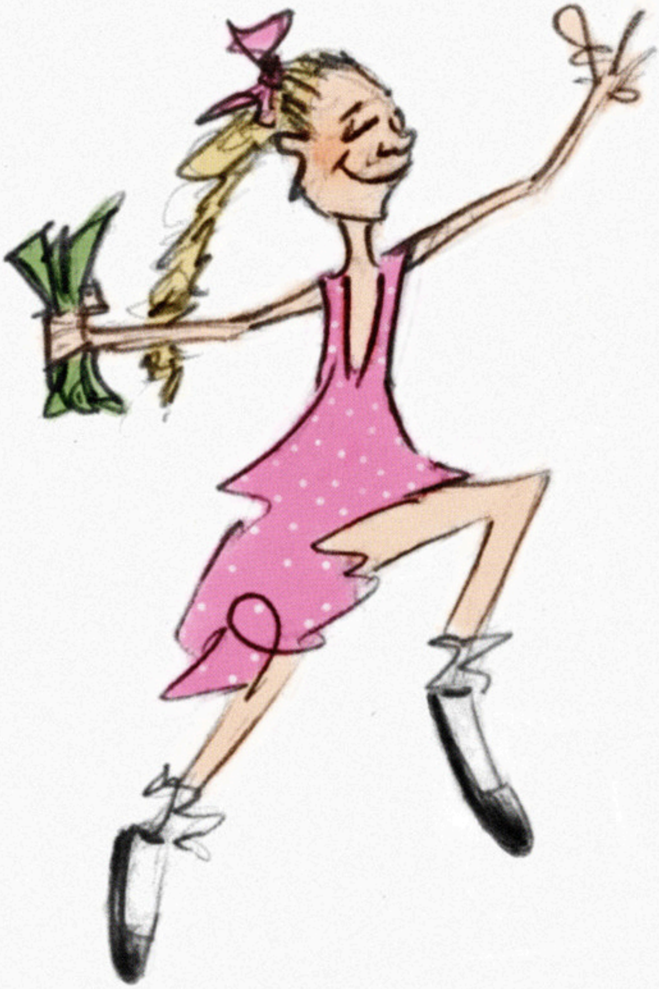
TWICE is a K-pop girl group out of JYP Entertainment, and they came on the scene back in 2015 after a survival show called *Sixteen*. They dropped their debut project *The Story Begins* on October 20th, and from day one they had that bright presence that made people pay attention. The world ate it up quick. Songs like "Like OOH-AHH," "Cheer Up," and "TT" took them from rookies to global stars in no time, and each member brought something different to the table—Nayeon, Jeongyeon, Momo, Sana, Jihyo, Mina, Dahyun, Chaeyoung, and Tzuyu. Together, they are one of the groups that helped push K-pop into a new era around the world.

SCAN THE CODES

My Mom Gave Her
like 3 Dollars An
Hour To Teach Me
Piano Lessons....



— a few dollars to teach your sister a *few* things on the piano.



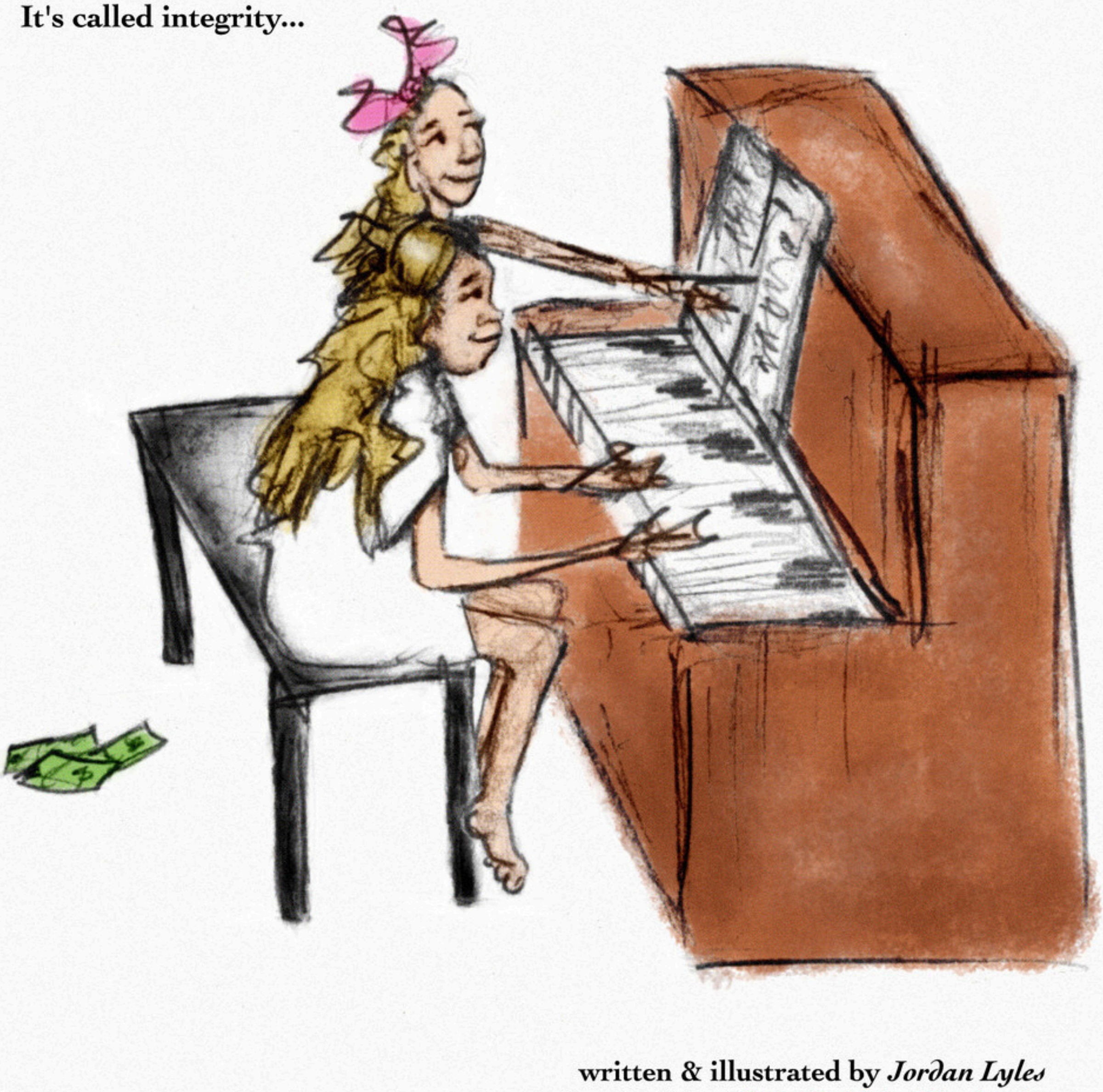
♪ one, two, three… three, two, one… ♪

Mom gave me three dollars to teach you *a few things* on piano, Sarah.
Three dollars? *Wow. Big spender!*

So here are your *few things*.
This key is *C*. This one is *D*. This one is *E*...

silence
That's it?

It's called integrity...



written & illustrated by *Jordan Lyles*

— *Four Fingers Magazine, Issue #1* Based on Sarah Graham's Piano Interview

STAFF UNPLUGGED

with SARAH GRAHAM

Jordan:
So a couple days ago you mentioned your piano roots.

Sarah:
I did? I did, huh!

Jordan:
Take me back to your first memory playing a piano, and how it's carried out through your years. And also, you mentioned you kind of slowed down. Why did you slow down?

Sarah:
Yeah, so I started playing piano because my older sister played piano, and she actually is the one who started teaching me. My mom gave her like three dollars an hour to teach me piano lessons. So that's where I started. We had a very, very old piano at my house and it was broken. So I actually learned how to play on a piano that was off key, and then there were not any pedals. So I never learned how to use the pedal on the piano well until a lot later.

And then eventually my mom found an actual piano teacher. So I went and took piano lessons in exchange for babysitting for a couple of years. I really liked her. Her name was Mrs. Chesnock, and she taught me for, I want to say, probably like three years. And then she stopped teaching piano lessons. So then I went to this other guy, and I hated going to him. This was probably like five years into playing the piano. So I told my mom that I would teach myself, and she believed me. And so I stopped taking piano lessons after six years, and I never taught myself. I don't know why she believed me with that.

Jordan:
How would you rank your skill level now?

Sarah:
Out of what? Like one to five?

Jordan:
Out of ten.

Sarah:
Yeah, like a three.

Jordan:
How about then though?

Sarah:
Then I was probably like a six.

Jordan:
How old were you when you started?

Sarah:
When I first started, oh my gosh, I don't know, maybe like six or seven, I would guess. And then I stopped right before going into high school, I think.

Jordan:
Would you pick it back up?

Sarah:
Yeah, I would. I really loved playing. And the reason I stopped was because that guy really threw me off and he was just weird. But I actually really loved playing. I was starting to get into playing songs that I would just listen to on my own, like in a playlist, versus these classical pieces. I wasn't interested in that. But I really loved just playing and singing. I'm not a singer, but if I could just go into a room and play and sing, I absolutely love that. So yes, I absolutely would pick it back up for sure.

Jordan:
Nice, thank you.

Sarah:
Yeah. Good time.
Appreciate you.

— Scan to Watch 3 Dollar Piano Lessons *(Timelapse)*

BECOME THE MICHAEL JORDAN OF MICS

NORBERT SHARES HIS EXPERTISE ON MIKING DRUMS.

Norbert guided me through a hands-on drum miking session, explaining each step with a mix of technical precision and practical wisdom. We started with the kick drum, connecting an XLR cable from the mic to channel one. Norbert explained that XLRs connect male to female and that proper cable management — avoiding "pretzels" — is one of the first things taught in audio training.

We moved on to the snare drum, using a Shure SM57. Norbert emphasized the importance of secure mic mounting: "Never twist the mic on while it's attached to the clip," he warned. "Always screw the clip on first — one bad drop could ruin a mic." I adjusted the stand while Norbert coached me on mic placement, making sure it was close enough to capture the snare without getting struck by the sticks.

Next came the hi-hat. Norbert compared microphones to camera lenses — they capture what you aim them at. "If you point it at the whole kit, it picks up everything," he explained. "Aim it just toward the hi-hat to reduce bleed." He reminded me to keep cables off the floor and out of the drummer's way.

For the toms, Norbert showed how to clip the mics directly onto the drum rims, each one going into its own channel. He explained why engineers mic every drum separately: "You want control in the mix. If you EQ the snare, it shouldn't change the toms."

Before setting up the overheads, Norbert paused to demonstrate proper cable wrapping. He taught me the over-under technique, showing how alternating the loop direction prevents twisting. "Every studio will love you for this," he said. "It tells them you know what you're doing."

Finally, we placed the overhead mics — the tall stands with counterweights — like stereo cameras above the kit. Norbert explained that engineers typically mix from the drummer's perspective: hi-hat on the left, floor tom on the right.

He closed the session with a brief history lesson, comparing modern multi-mic setups to the Beatles' early recordings, which used only two microphones. "Technology gives us control now," he said, "but the goal hasn't changed — capture the performance and keep the drummer comfortable."

As we packed up, I thanked Norbert for the lesson. "It's like a muscle," Norbert said with a grin. "The more you do it, the better you get."

— October 20th, 2025

> "EVERY STUDIO WILL LOVE YOU FOR THIS"

Pro Tip from Norbert — Think of each mic like a camera: aim where you want sound captured. Every drummer is different — adapt, and always support the musician. Comfort and workflow are just as important as the gear.

STEP BY STEP

1. CABLES AND MICS

Grab your XLR cables; male-to-female standard.

Learn the over-under technique to wind cables: it prevents tangles, keeps cables neat, and avoids damage.

Secure mic clips to stands before mounting the mic. Falling mics = expensive mistakes.

2. KICK MIC:

Dynamic mic (e.g., Shure Beta 52, AKG D112).

Placement: Slightly inside or just at the resonant head hole. Avoid contact with the beater.

Angle: Point at the center of the drumhead for more attack, toward the hole for more low-end.

3. SNARE MIC:

Shure SM57 (dynamic).

Placement: About 1–2 inches above the drumhead, pointing at the center. Slight tilt away from drummer's sticks.

Optional: Bottom snare mic for snare "snappiness." Invert phase to avoid cancellation.

4. HI-HAT MIC:

Small-diaphragm condenser.

Placement: 3–6 inches above edge of hi-hat.

Angle: Slightly away from snare and toms to reduce bleed. Capture hi-hat crispness without unwanted cymbals.

5. TOM MICS:

Dynamic (SM57 or similar) for rack toms, floor tom.

Placement: 1–2 inches above the drumhead, pointing at center. Avoid the drummer hitting the mic.

Each mic on a separate channel for full mix control.

6. OVERHEAD MICS:

Condenser stereo pair (large or small diaphragm).

Placement: Over the kit in a spaced pair.

QUICK REFERENCE:

Kick Drum: Dynamic mic, channel 1, inside or near resonant head, angle for attack or low-end.

Snare Drum: SM57, channel 2, 1–2 inches above center, optional bottom mic.

Hi-Hat: Small-diaphragm condenser, 3–6 inches above edge, angled away from other drums.

Toms: Dynamic mics, 1–2 inches above head, each on its own channel.

Overheads: Stereo pair, equal distance from snare, hi-hat left, floor tom right.

SUMMARY

Total Mics: 8

1 Kick drum, 1 Snare top (optional 1 bottom) • 1 Hi-hat • 3 Toms (rack and floor) • 2 Overheads (stereo left/right)

Total XLR Cables: 8 (one per mic; longer cables may be needed for overheads and room mics)

Mic Stands Required: 6–8

1 Kick stand (if using clip mount) • 1 Snare stand • 1 Hi-hat stand (with mic clamp) • 3 Tom stands or boom arms • 2 Overhead boom stands

SOUND 4MATION In the 1940s and 1950s, drums were typically captured with just one or two microphones, relying on room acoustics to balance the kit. By the 1960s and 1970s, engineers began close-miking individual drums and using overheads and room mics, giving full control over each drum while still capturing the kit's natural sound.

MIC CHECK The Shure SM57 is one of the most trusted microphones in the music world, known for its durability and versatility. Originally designed for instrument recording, it excels on snare drums, guitar amps, and even brass instruments. Its dynamic cardioid design focuses on the sound source while rejecting unwanted background noise, making it perfect for live and studio environments.

THE MAX METHOD

Learn to mic drums using the methods of Max Cutshall..

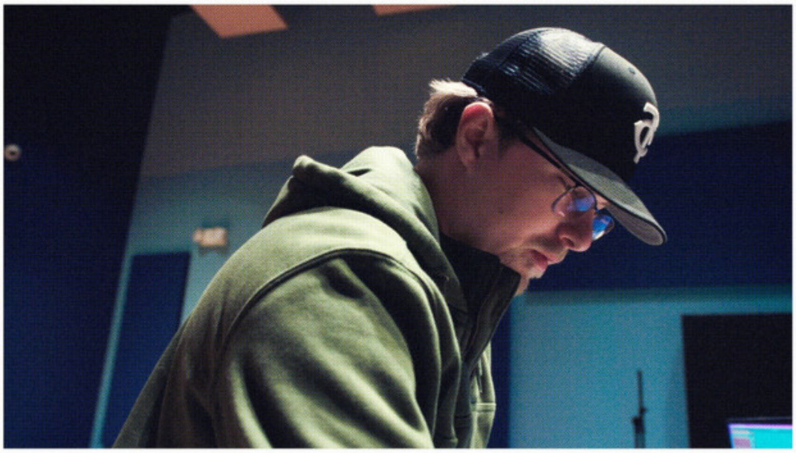
First, I always go with the kick. Grab a cable and go straight to the patch bay. Make sure it's secure. Next: snare top, and snare bottom. Then hi-hat. Then toms, wrapping the cables around the base. Plug those in. Next is the room mic. I want extra slack because it´s going higher. That should sound cool – we're about eight feet up, depending on the height of the ceiling. Then two overheads – also going higher, so leave slack so the cable doesn't catch when raising them. I'll gather the cables neatly. A big part of mic placement is just keeping things where the drummer won't hit them while they're playing. If the hi-hat mic is too close to the inside, they may smack it while playing, so I'll usually keep it off to the side, three fingers or so from the drum.

For the overheads, I´m facing the snare in line with the kick. We're slightly off center from the drum kit, going for a triangle between the snare and the two overheads. I'm making sure both overheads are the same distance from the snare so the snare stays centered in the stereo image. I'll demonstrate how I measure that precisely:

I grab a cable – guitar cable, XLR, string, whatever – and measure from the center of the snare up to the mic capsule. I hold it until it gets tight. If one mic is farther or closer, I adjust the stand until both match. I made this method up – we can call it "the Max method." This ensures the overheads receive the snare at the same time, preventing phase issues. If the two overheads are uneven, the snare might sound biased toward the right or left.

November 18th, 2025

Documented by Jordan Lyles



PATCH BAY

Now the patch bay. This is the complicated part. The patch bay is basically a big row of inputs and outputs. On the top row we have inputs 1 through 24, which are all the mic lines coming in from the live room. We plugged our mics into inputs 1 through 10. Now, if I plug into jack 1 on the patch bay, I'm choosing where the kick will go. I'm patching the first four into the API 1–4 preamps: kick, snare top, snare bottom, and hi-hat.

Next are the toms. I like to use the same colored cables so I remember what's what. There are three toms, so I use three blue cables. Inputs 5, 6, and 7 will go into the Universal Audio preamps 1, 2, and 3.

Next, the room mic from input 8 is going into API channel 5.

Then I need to decide where the overheads will go. They're in 9 and 10 in the live room. I'm patching those into the Neve 1 and 2.

If we follow these patch points downward, input 1 on top automatically goes down to output A9 behind the panel, and so on down the line.

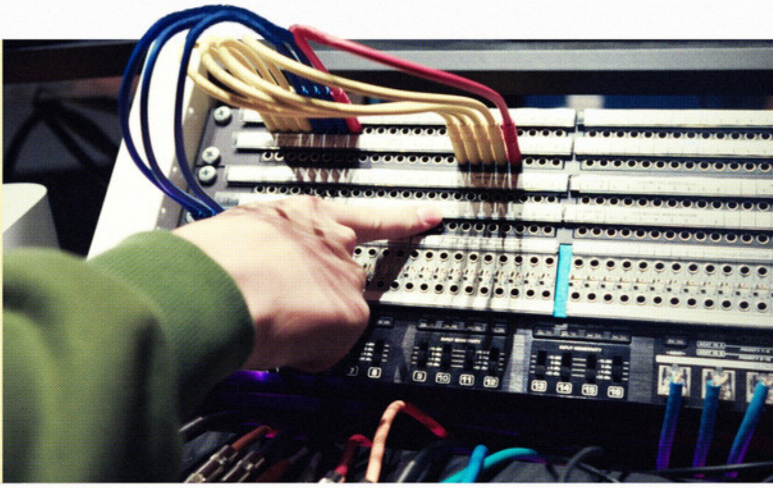
Now in Pro Tools, we select our inputs. Kick is A9. Then 10, 11, and 12 for the next few mics. The toms are patched into the UAD preamps, so we select 1, 2, and 3 there. The room mic is on API preamp 13. Overheads are on the Neves – A1 and A2.

Now we set levels. This is the part where it's helpful to have someone actually playing the drums, but we can guess and adjust. For kick and snare, I'll turn the pad on because they're loud. Since we have two mics on the snare pointing at each other, we need to flip the polarity on one so they don't cancel out.

The Hi-hat uses a condenser mic, so we need phantom power. Turn that on. The Room mic also needs phantom power. For the overheads, make sure the power and phantom power are on and I'll turn the gain knobs to about halfway.

For the toms, I usually set them around 25 dB of gain to start. They're dynamics, so no phantom power needed. We can fine-tune once we hear the drummer.

Now let's check everything. You don't even have to be a drummer – just hit each drum and make sure the signal is coming through.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT ◆ DJ MICKEY BREEZE

DJ, producer, artist, educator, and entrepreneur — Mickey Breeze represents the next generation of exceptional musical talent emerging from the Twin Cities. A proud alumnus of the High School for Recording Arts (HSRA), Mickey has transformed his passion for music into a platform for creativity, education, and entrepreneurship, embodying HSRA's mission to help young people develop creative mindsets through their artistic gifts — enabling them to apply these valuable skills and competencies in any field of human endeavor.

Mickey began DJing in 2010, developing a sound inspired by artists such as Troyboi, DJ Craze, Kanye West, Chrome Sparks, and Timbaland. By the age of 20, he had already built an impressive résumé — performing at SXSW, Soundset Music Festival, Twin Cities Pride, Super Bowl LII Tostitos Bowl, St. Paul Winter Carnival, and 50 Years of Ebony Fashion Fair. Known to fans as "Breezy," he's recognized not only for his technical mastery but also for his originality. Unlike DJs who simply play tracks, Mickey uses a drum pad controller to add live percussion, transitions, and original beats to his sets, creating immersive performances that blend hip-hop, electronic, and experimental sounds. His approach turns every show into a unique experience that bridges the worlds of production, performance, and improvisation.

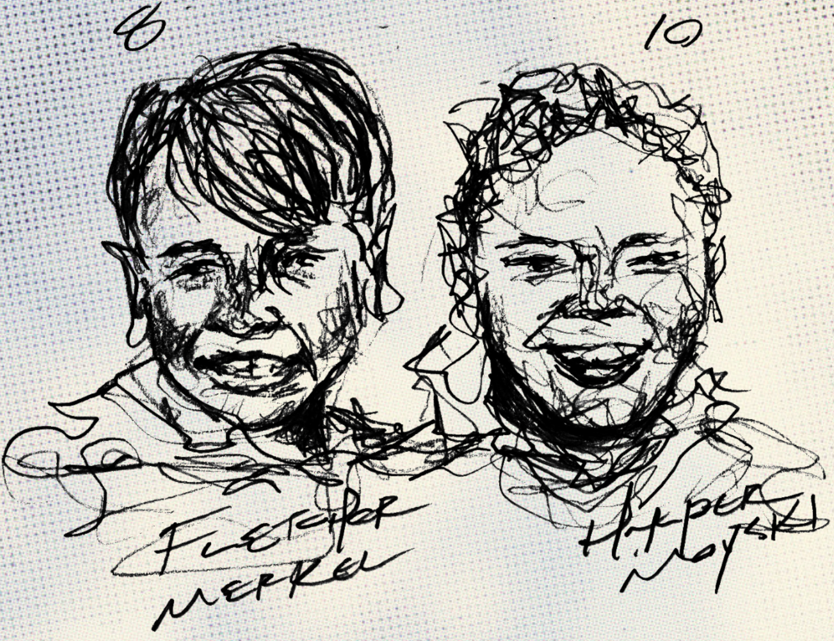
Beyond the stage, Mickey has built a reputation as a forward-thinking entrepreneur and educator. His award-winning original productions have been featured in Minnesota Timberwolves campaigns and movie scores, and his creative collaborations span media, fashion, and technology. As both a performer and presenter, Mickey has shared his talents and insights at national and local education events — including the Deeper Learning Conference in San Diego, RemixED Conferences in St. Paul, and even at the iconic Paisley Park Studios. Mickey proves that when passion meets purpose, the result is more than music — it's transformation.

At each of these events, he uses music as a tool to inspire, educate, and connect people from diverse backgrounds, demonstrating the power of artistry to foster both learning and community.

Mickey is also a proud fixture of Leadership Journeys, an initiative produced by Big Picture Learning. Leadership Journeys is a multimedia, DJ-fueled celebration that replaces turntables with slide decks — but not the soul. It creates space for educators of color and allies in the progressive education movement to share deeply personal stories, embracing vulnerability and authenticity as strengths. Working with conferences, convenings, and organizations nationwide, Leadership Journeys highlights the power of storytelling as a path toward healing, connection, and what its creators call "collective dopeness."

Through all these endeavors, Mickey Breeze continues to demonstrate how creativity can drive innovation, leadership, and community impact. His journey from HSRA student to nationally recognized performer, educator, and entrepreneur reflects the heart of HSRA's vision — helping young people see their artistry not just as talent, but as a foundation for lifelong learning and purpose. From classrooms to national stages,

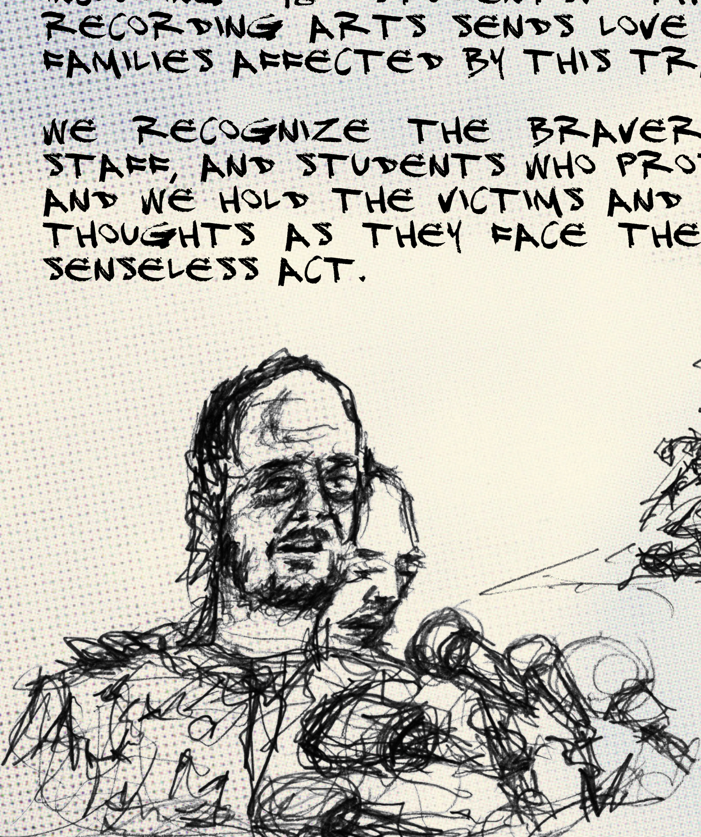
—from the HSRA website

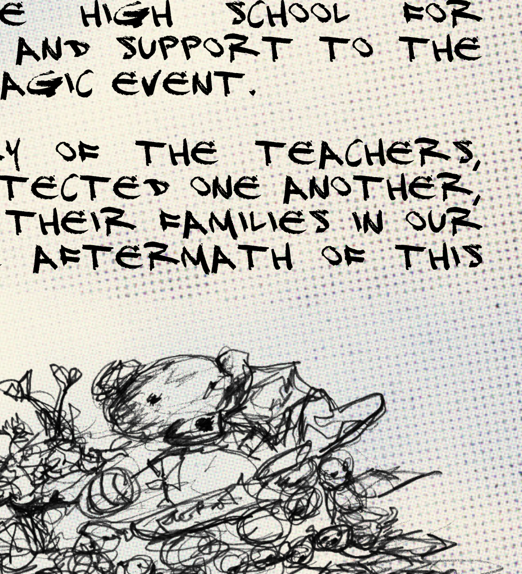


PREYING IN SCHOOLS

ON AUGUST 27, 2025, A SHOOTING AT ANNUNCIATION CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SOUTH MINNEAPOLIS TOOK THE LIVES OF TWO YOUNG CHILDREN AND INJURED 21 OTHERS, INCLUDING 18 STUDENTS. THE HIGH SCHOOL FOR RECORDING ARTS SENDS LOVE AND SUPPORT TO THE FAMILIES AFFECTED BY THIS TRAGIC EVENT.

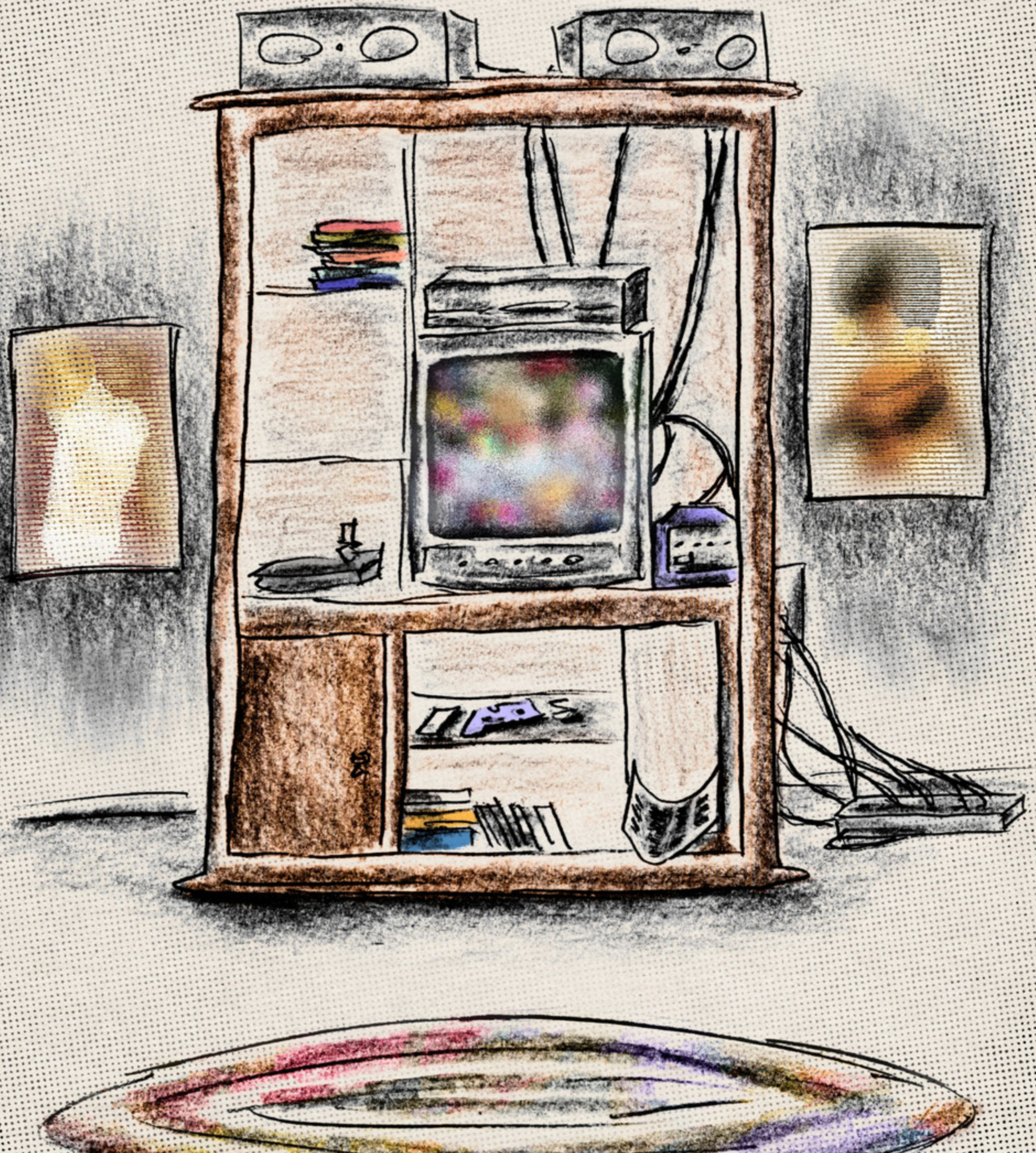
WE RECOGNIZE THE BRAVERY OF THE TEACHERS, STAFF, AND STUDENTS WHO PROTECTED ONE ANOTHER, AND WE HOLD THE VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN OUR THOUGHTS AS THEY FACE THE AFTERMATH OF THIS SENSELESS ACT.

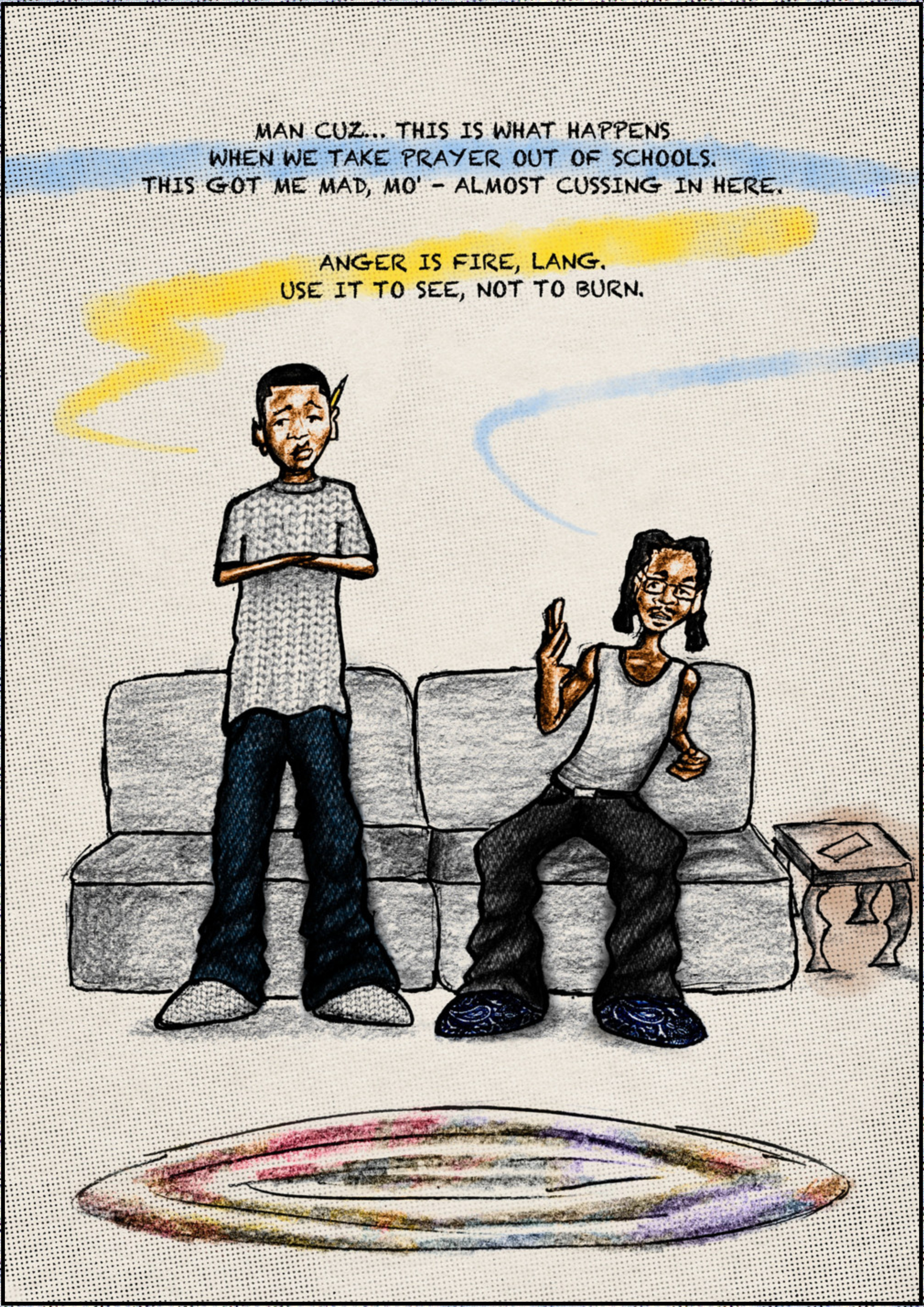




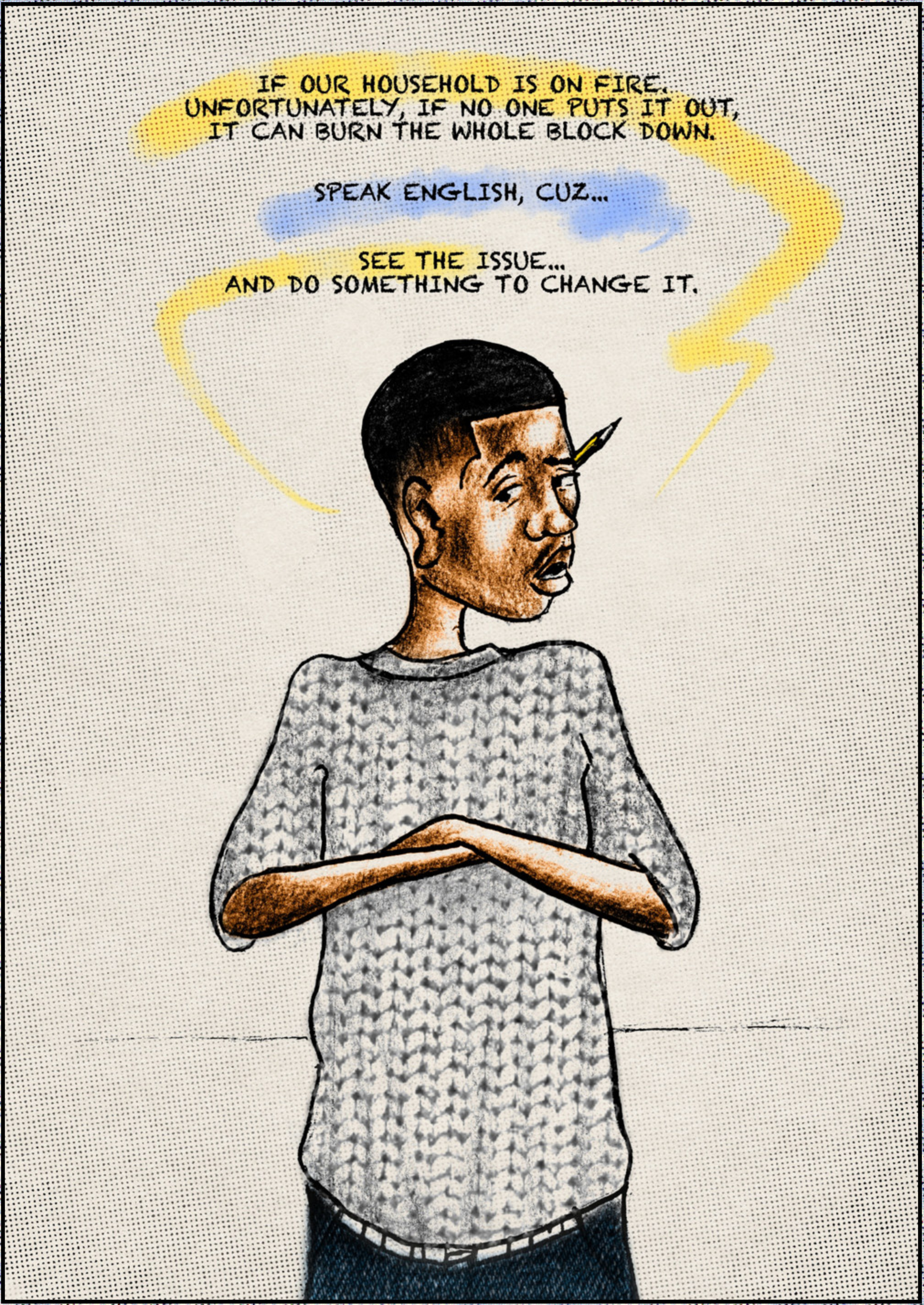
illustrated by ***Jordan Lyles***

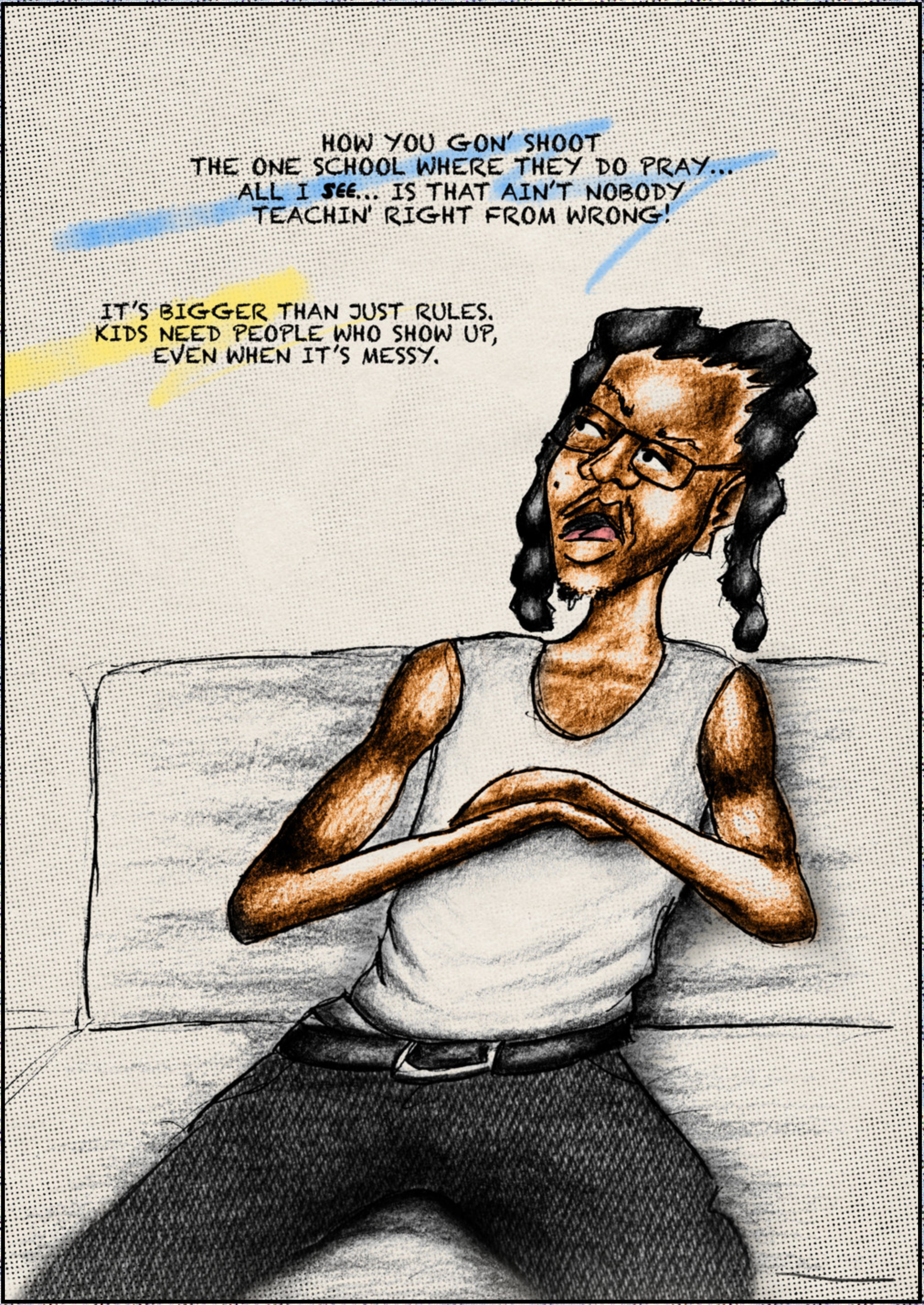
NEWS REPORT: A SHOOTER OPENED FIRE DURING A BACK-TO-SCHOOL MASS AT A MINNEAPOLIS CHURCH. TWO CHILDREN WERE KILLED AND 18 OTHERS INJURED.

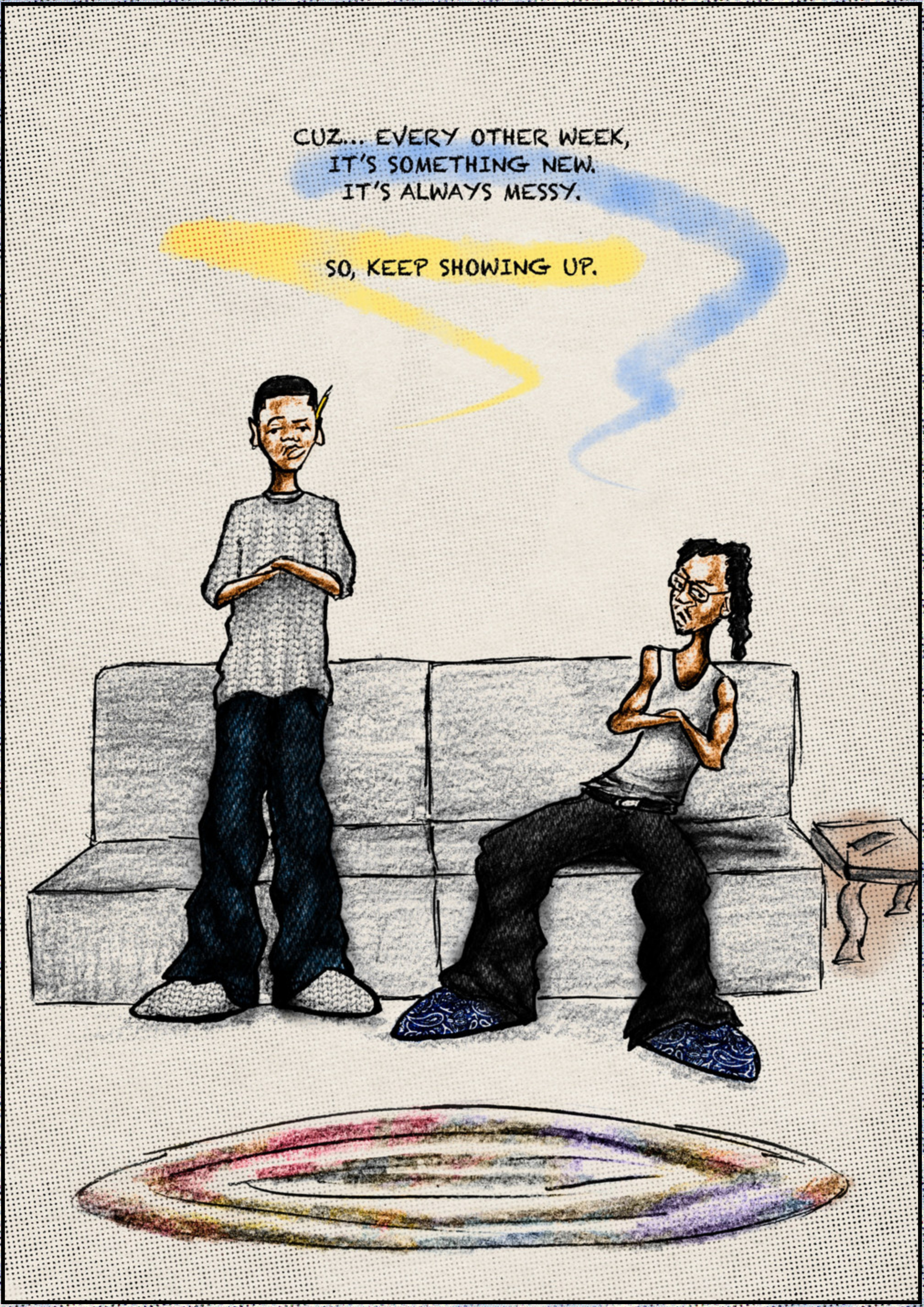




MAN CUZ... THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE TAKE PRAYER OUT OF SCHOOLS. THIS GOT ME MAD, MO' – ALMOST CUSSING IN HERE.
ANGER IS FIRE, LANG. USE IT TO SEE, NOT TO BURN.

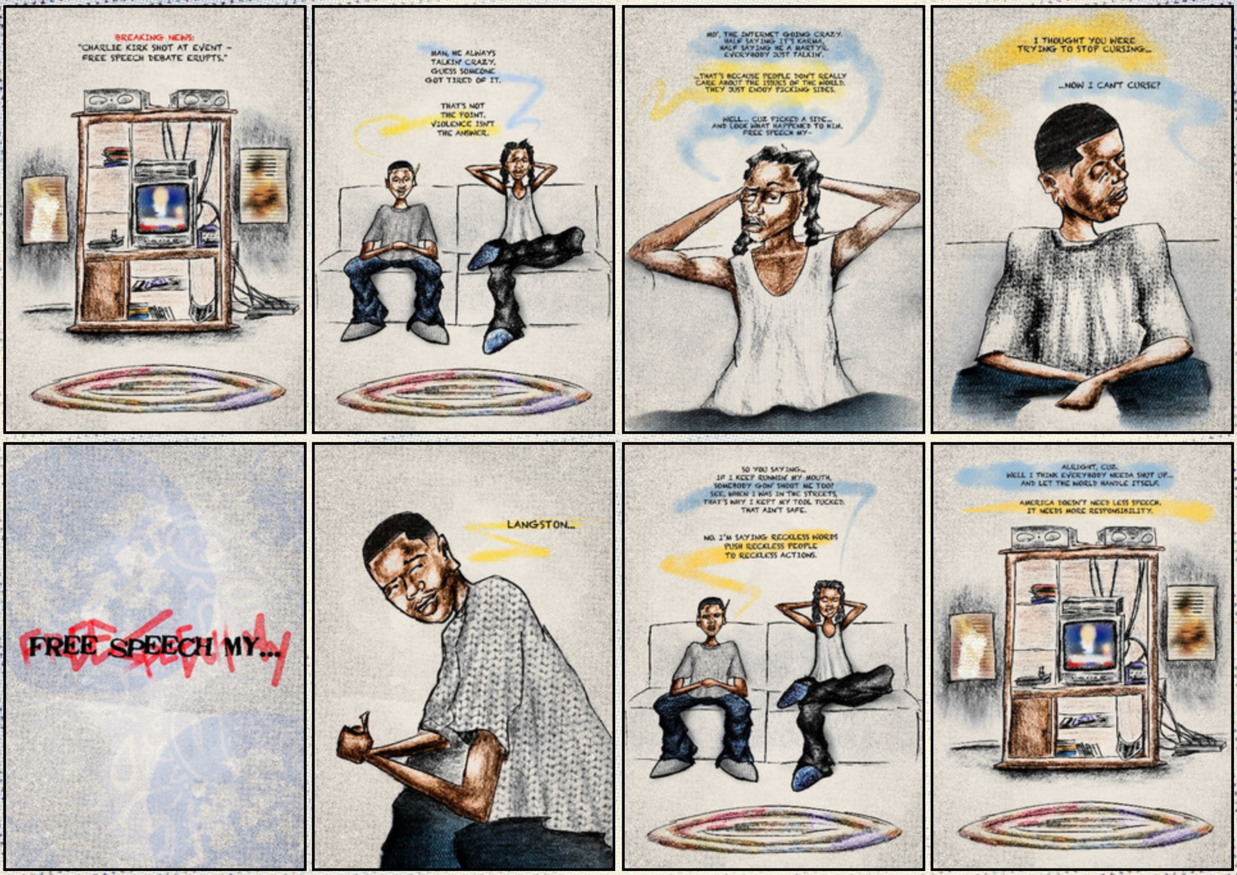

IF OUR HOUSEHOLD IS ON FIRE. UNFORTUNATELY, IF NO ONE PUTS IT OUT, IT CAN BURN THE WHOLE BLOCK DOWN.
SPEAK ENGLISH, CUZ...
SEE THE ISSUE... AND DO SOMETHING TO CHANGE IT.


HOW YOU GON' SHOOT THE ONE SCHOOL WHERE THEY DO PRAY... ALL I **SEE**... IS THAT AIN'T NOBODY TEACHIN' RIGHT FROM WRONG!
IT'S BIGGER THAN JUST RULES. KIDS NEED PEOPLE WHO SHOW UP, EVEN WHEN IT'S MESSY.


CUZ... EVERY OTHER WEEK,
IT'S SOMETHING NEW.
IT'S ALWAYS MESSY.
SO, KEEP SHOWING UP.

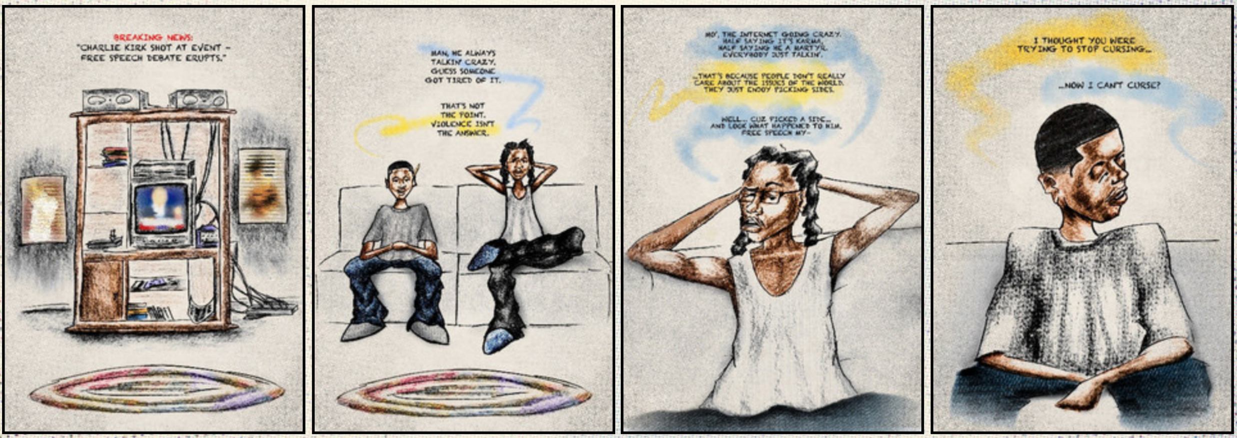
FREE SPEECH MY...

ISSUE # 1


BREAKING NEWS:
"CHARLIE KIRK SHOT AT EVENT – FREE SPEECH DEBATE ERUPTS."
MAN, HE ALWAYS TALKIN' CRAZY. GUESS SOMEONE GOT TIRED OF IT.
THAT'S NOT THE POINT. VIOLENCE ISN'T THE ANSWER.
MY, THE INTERNET GOING CRAZY. HALF SAYING IT'S KARMA, HALF SAYING HE A MARTYR. EVERYBODY JUST TALKIN'.
...THAT'S BECAUSE PEOPLE DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT THE ISSUES OF THE WORLD. THEY JUST ENJOY PICKING SIDES.
WELL... CUZ PICKED A SIDE... AND LOOK WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM. FREE SPEECH MY–
I THOUGHT YOU WERE TRYING TO STOP CURSING...
...NOW I CAN'T CURSE?
FREE SPEECH MY...
LANGSTON...
SO YOU SAYING... IF I KEEP RUNNIN' MY MOUTH, SOMEBODY GON' SHOOT ME TOO? SEE, WHEN I WAS IN THE STREETS, THAT'S WHY I KEPT MY TOOL TUCKED. THAT AIN'T SAFE.
NO. I'M SAYING RECKLESS WORDS PUSH RECKLESS PEOPLE TO RECKLESS ACTIONS.
ALRIGHT, CUZ. WELL I THINK EVERYBODY NEEDA SHUT UP... AND LET THE WORLD HANDLE ITSELF.
AMERICA DOESN'T NEED LESS SPEECH. IT NEEDS MORE RESPONSIBILITY.

ADMIT IT

ISSUE # 2



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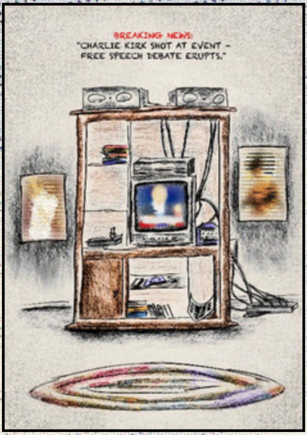
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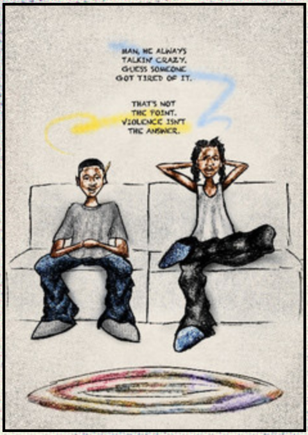
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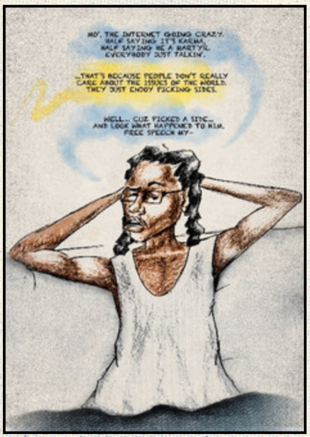
MO', THE INTERNET GOING CRAZY. HALF SAYING IT'S KARMA, HALF SAYING HE A MARTYR. EVERYBODY JUST TALKIN'.
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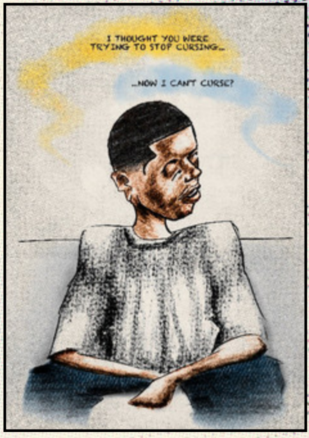
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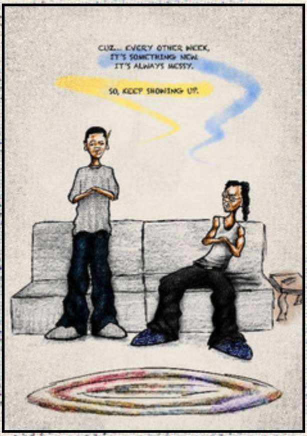

CUZ... EVERY OTHER WEEK, IT'S SOMETHING NEW. IT'S ALWAYS MESSY.
SO, KEEP SHOWING UP.

Dear Reader,

I hope you enjoyed this set of entries as we introduced the surface of Langston and Mo' while they move through real-world chaos and try to stay grounded. In the first comic, they react to a shooting involving Charlie Kirk and break down how people online just enjoy picking sides instead of thinking, and how reckless talk fuels reckless actions. In the second, they shift into their day-to-day reality, arguing about bills, responsibility, and adulthood, with Langston low-key admitting he still looks up to Mo'. In the third, they respond to a church shooting involving children, wrestling with anger, faith, and what it actually means to step up when the world keeps getting darker.

Across all three, the theme stays the same; two brothers trying to make sense of a broken world without losing their heads or their humanity.

Keep watch for the next issue as new characters enter the story and the world of Westsouth Hospitality grows beyond the living room debates. Every strip has a story, every person brings a lesson, and Langston and Mo' are just starting their journey through it. And honestly… this feels like a dream for that little kid in class who used to zone out, sketching characters in the margins and imagining his own cartoons coming to life.

Now those same daydreams are turning into pages, panels, and a whole world that finally gets to breathe. This is only the beginning; there's a whole community of characters waiting to be uncovered.

Until the next issue,

Jordan Lyles

West South Hospitality
Issue #1

A CHANGE IS GONNA COME.
OH, YES IT WILL.

SAM COOKE WROTE "A CHANGE IS GONNA COME" IN 1963, INSPIRED BY HIS EXPERIENCES WITH RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, PARTICULARLY BEING TURNED AWAY FROM A WHITES-ONLY MOTEL IN SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA. COOKE AND HIS ENTOURAGE WERE REFUSED SERVICE AT A HOLIDAY INN, LEADING TO A CONFRONTATION AND HIS ARREST FOR CAUSING A DISTURBANCE. THE SONG WAS ALSO INFLUENCED BY BOB DYLAN'S PROTEST SONG "BLOWIN' IN THE WIND," AND COOKE INTENDED IT TO BE AN ANTHEM FOR THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. IT WAS RELEASED AS A SINGLE IN DECEMBER 1964, TWO WEEKS AFTER HIS DEATH.

— Listen to Iyani & Jordan sing 'A Change Gon' Come'

When a voice hits one note but you can hear extra pitches on top of it, it's called polyphonic overtone singing.

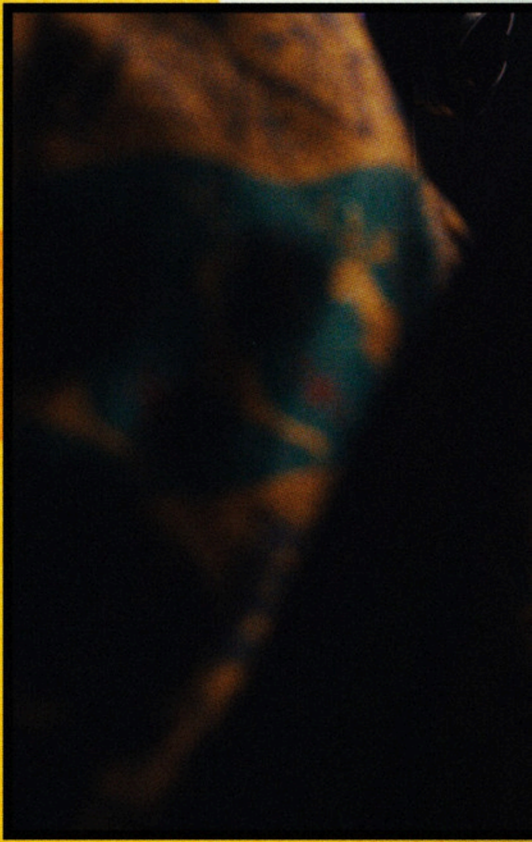
Polyphonic – "poly" means many, and "phonic" means sound. So polyphonic just means many sounds happening at once.

Overtone – is a note that rings above the main note. It's part of the natural vibration of the sound, but it's higher than the note you're singing.

Another name people sometimes use for polyphonic overtone singing is throat singing.

It's the style practiced traditionally in places like Mongolia and Tuva, where singers intentionally produce overtones.

Iyani Dozier has done this quite a few times while working together in the studio.



IYANI DOZIER is one of those people who walks into a room already carrying the weight of her calling. She's a phenomenal vocalist, but what stands out even more is how sure she is about the direction of what she wants to create. There's no guessing with Iyani. She's hands on with production, vocal about her vision, and firm in a way that is intentional, not stubborn. She knows what she hears, and she's committed to bringing out the most polished, honest version of every recording and performance she touches. She also respects constructive criticism and is always curious of the feedback of those she carries respect for.

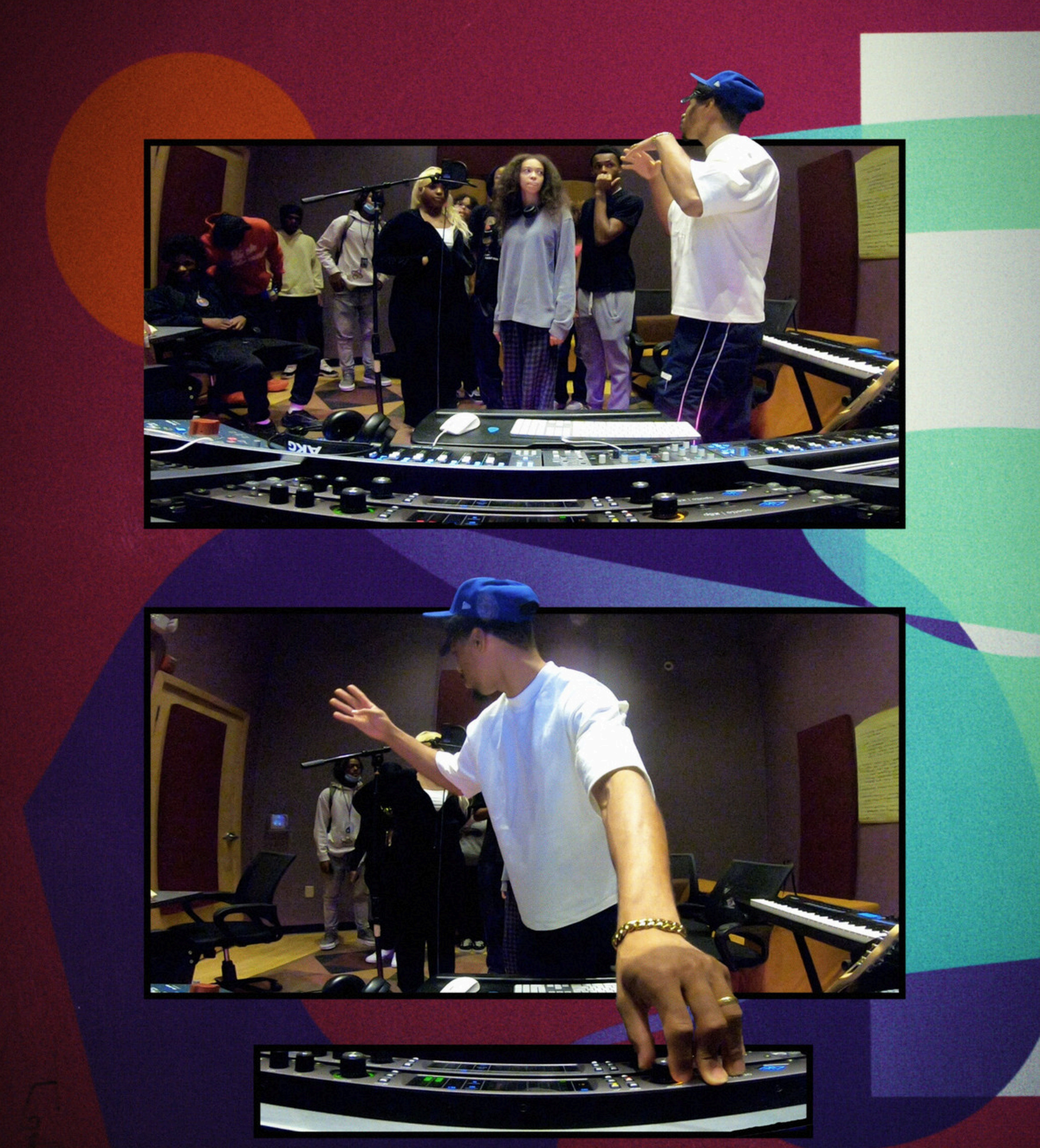
From the first day we stepped into the studio together, there was an instant click. No ego, no forcing, we just jumped in and worked like we'd been working for years. Full of laughs, full of do-over takes, full of coaching, and full of intentional decision making. The more sessions we sit in, the more obvious it becomes that Iyani has a future in this if she keeps pressing towards the mark. Not because someone told her she does, but because she lives, and talks like she knows she does.

What is most inspiring is how I've seen Iyani navigate obstacles that show up in her path, no matter if it's a ride situation, a communication mishap, a unpredictable scenario, she always pulls up and chooses to looks at the bright side of whatever event may have taken place. And once she's on campus, she'll find any sliver of time, five minutes, ten minutes, a passing moment, to slip into the studio and lay down an idea. It's the kind of drive you can't teach. The kind that separates a hobby from a career. Iyani's story is still being written, but from the way she operates, I believe if she keeps that spark fresh, it'll turn into a flame that will only continue to spread.

— photographed by *Khloe Kruchowski*

— **Persyia, Shila, Virginia, & Dannon singing background for *'Count of Four'*, theme song for *Four Fingers*.**

"On three? Nah on four" — Virginia Depratto records a voice over for the *Four Fingers* tag line.



—"How many fingers I'm holding up?"

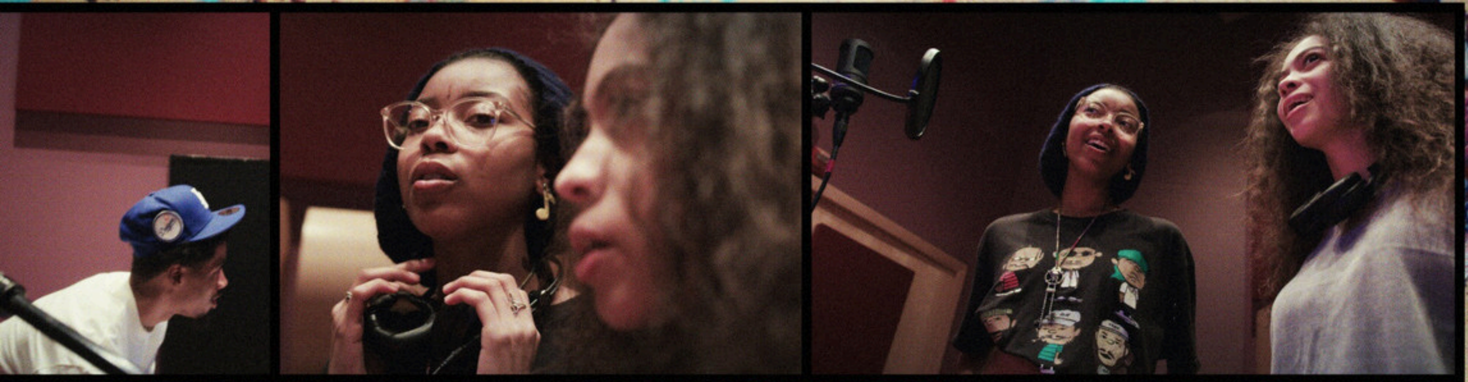
—Khloe sitting in on the mixing session for *'Count of Four'*.
photographed by *Virginia Depratto*

— Persyia waiting for the next take and Shila throwing up the double deuce.

— *Scan to Listen* to *Iyani Dozier* sing some Corrine Bailey Rae, Fugees, & Sam Cooke

— Charlie Vasquez laying down some adlibs for *'Count of Four'*.

— Scan to watch the making of
'Count of Four'



COUNT OF FOUR

SEPTEMBER 3RD, 2025

COUNT OF FOUR

ON THE COUNT OF THREE?
NAH, ON FOUR

HOW MANY FINGERS I'M
HOLDING UP?
FOUR!

SOMETIMES IT'S ALL
ABOUT SHOWING UP
FAHSO!

THEY SAYING THAT WE
CAN'T BRING THE FUNK
SO!

HOW MANY FINGERS I'M
HOLDING UP?
FOUR!

FELLAS, WHEN YOU WANT
THE BEAT TO DROP?
ON THE COUNT OF FOUR!
LADIES, WHEN YOU WANT
THE BEAT TO DROP?
ON THE COUNT OF FOUR!
WHEN YOU WANT THE BEAT
TO DROP?
ON THE COUNT OF FOUR...

ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR!

BUM, BA-BUM, BUM, BUM
BA-BUM, BUM (X4)

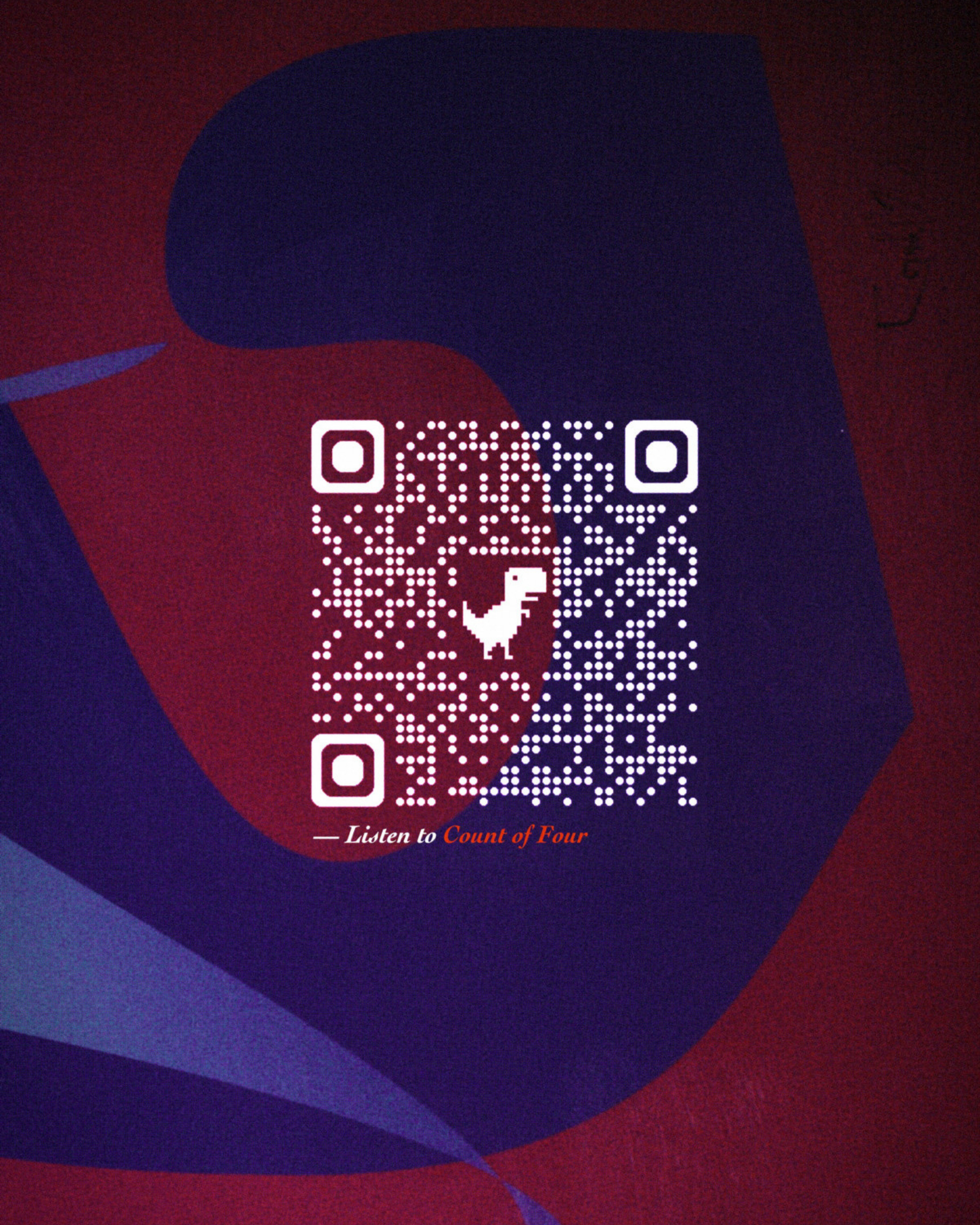
IF YOU CAN COUNT TO
FOUR
THERE'S SOMETHING
YOU SHOULD KNOW
FUNK LIVES INSIDE YOUR
SOUL

IF YOU CAN COUNT TO
FOUR
THERE'S SOMETHING
YOU SHOULD KNOW
FUNK LIVES INSIDE YOUR
SOUL

HOW MANY FINGERS I'M
HOLDING UP?

FOUR!

Written & Produced by Jordan Lyles
Lead Vocals — Moriah Anderson, Jordan Lyles
Background Vocals — Virginia Depratto, Shila Perkins, Persyia, Moriah Anderson,
Dannon Lewis McGhee, Murray, Jahai Lilley, Khari Johnson



— *Listen to Count of Four*

— Scan to watch the making of *'Easier'*

EASIER

SEPTEMBER 4TH, 2025

EASIER

I DON'T WANNA SHOOT YOU
I'D RATHER TALK IT THROUGH
I DON'T WANT TO BRUISE YOU
I'D RATHER MAKE A TRUCE

IT'S EASER
TO PUT DOWN YOUR SWORD
IT'S EASIER
TO MAKE PEACE NOT WAR
IT'S EASIER
TO TAKE CARE OF SOMEBODY
MUCH EASIER
THAN TO PUT A BODY IN A MORGUE

IT'S EASIER
TO GIVE ME YOUR LOVE
IT'S EASIER
BABY IT'S REALLY NOT HARD
IT'S EASIER
TO PUT DOWN YOUR GLOVES
MUCH EASIER
THAN TO KEEP UP THAT GUARD

IT'S EASIER, EASIER
EASIER TO LOVE SOMEBODY
I DON'T WANT TO CHOKE YOU
IT'S EASIER TO HUG SOMEBODY

I DON'T WANT TO KILL YOU
I'D RATHER MAKE YOU DIE
OF LAUGHTER
HA HA HA HA HA HA HAAAA
I DON'T WANT TO BE IN YOUR STORY
UNLESS IT'S HAPPILY EVERY AFTER
A HAPPIY EVER AFTER

IT'S EASIER
TO HANG ONTO SOMEBODY
IT'S EASIER,
THAN TO GANGBANG ON
SOMEBODY
IT'S EASIER TO KEEP YOUR SOUL
MUCH EASIER,
THAN TO RUN FROM ILLUMINATI

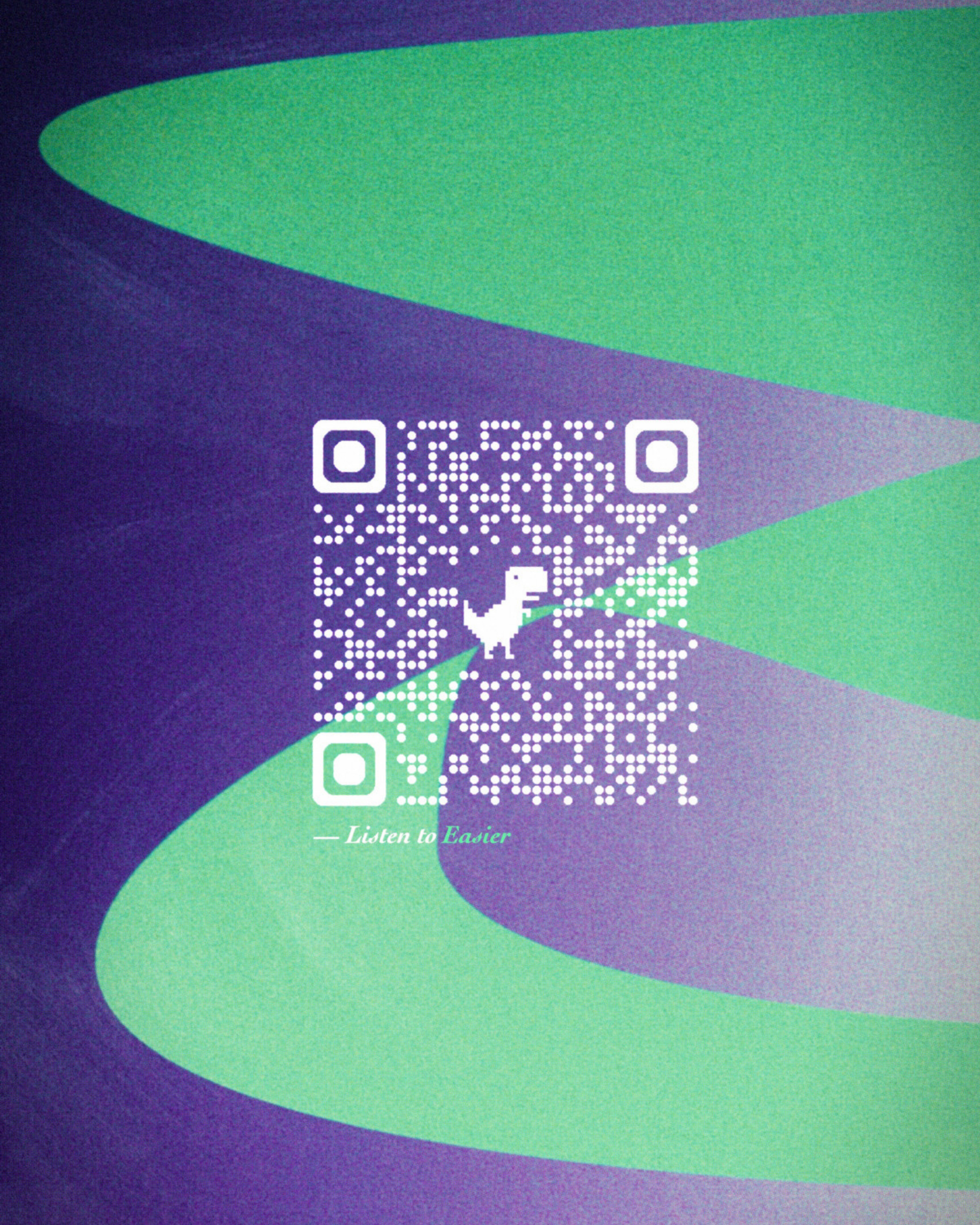
IT'S EASIER
TO GIVE ME SOMETHING
IT'S EASIER,
THAN TO SNATCH MY CHAIN
IT'S EASIER
TO KISS MY FOREHEAD
MUCH EASER,
THAN TO BLOW OUT MY BRAINS

IT'S EASIER
IT'S EASIER
IT'S EASIER
MUCH EASIER

OH, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S SO EASY
REALLY AIN'T KNOW
IT WAS THIS EASY
TAKE IT EASY ON ME
ON THREE
ONE, TWO, THREE!

IT'S EASIER, EASIER
EASIER TO LOVE SOMEBODY
I DON'T WANT TO CHOKE YOU
IT'S EASIER TO HUG SOMEBODY
DOO, DOO, DOO, DOO, DOO, DOO,
DOOOOOO

Written & Produced by Jordan Lyles
Piano Solo by Charlie Vasquez
Lead Vocals — Iyani Dozier, Moriah Anderson, Charlie Vasquez, Jordan Lyles
Background Vocals — CJ Lewis, Shila Perkins, Persyia, Murray, Jahai Lilley, Moriah Anderson,
Charlie Vasquez, Iyani Dozier



— *Listen to Easier*

Shila Perkins

Dannon Lewis McGhee

goofy pic of D.Y

Khloe Khruchowski

warren

Londynn Jones

Elly franklin

moriah anderson ☺

the class room I just walked in smell Bad

Kai Rogers

Rub my belly

Pibble

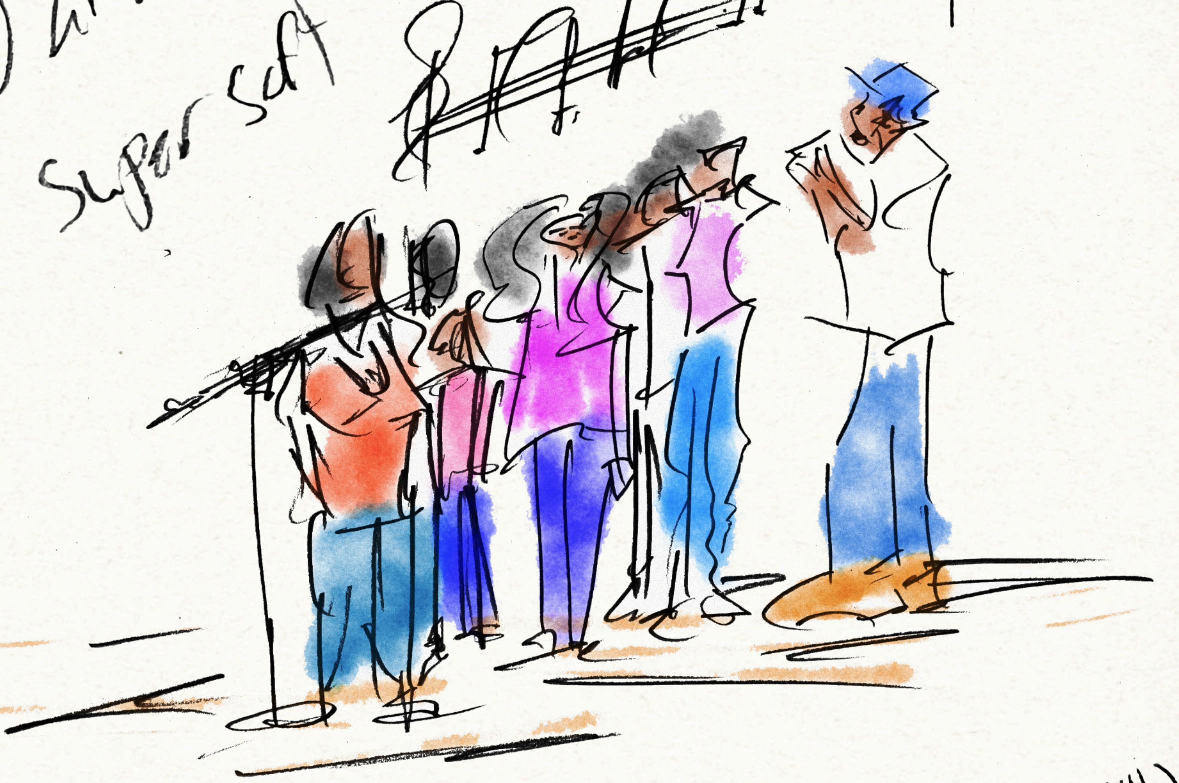
Charlie

Pizza, the teenage mutant ninja turtles,
very cheesy gooey, pizza, reminiscent
of little ceasers cheap slices

Jahari Hill

Virginia
DePratto

super soft



Leilani Kelly

90210 (feat. Tracy Hill)

Divinity
capers

I'yani Dozier
aka Groovy aka peacefoot

A public school for hip-hop is coming to the Bronx

by Jessica Shuran Yu

"Hip-hop reflects the brilliance of our students, their potential, and while the world has profited off hip-hop … it's time for our students and our community to make sure that it belongs and continues to belong to us," said Harry Sherman, superintendent of District 9. Hip-hop traces its roots to the Bronx, when DJ Kool Herc helped host a back-to-school party on Aug. 11, 1973, for his sister Cindy Campbell in the first-floor community room of their 18-story apartment building at 1520 Sedgwick Ave. DJ Kool Herc was known for his skills on the turntables, focusing on extending percussion breakdown, while dancers developed moves to the beats, and the DJ began speaking over the music in rhymes.

The Hip-Hop Museum, the first cultural institution to fully focus on hip-hop, is also expected to open in the South Bronx in the fall at 585 Exterior St., along the Harlem River. The museum is planning to have a Hip-Hop Science program, blending hip-hop culture and STEM learning by highlighting the scientific principles behind music production, dance, and technology, according to the museum's website.

"It's about keeping the Bronx at the center of a culture we gave to the world," said Carl Manalo, the high school superintendent for Districts 7, 9, and 12.

The panel also approved Wednesday a merger next school year of I.S. 313 and I.S. 339, two underenrolled schools at 1600 Webster Ave. The new hip-hop school will be co-located in the same building. Even with the merger and the addition of the Bronx School of Hip-Hop, the building is only expected to be about 34%-40% full, according to the merger proposal report.

The Bronx School of Hip-Hop will be the first non-charter school dedicated solely to hip-hop, officials said. (A charter school in St. Paul, Minnesota, called the High School for Recording Arts, is nicknamed "Hip-Hop High," and teaches students hip-hop and "other art forms" according to their website.)

"We made history today, and I'm really proud of the panel for doing that," said Gregory Faulkner, who chairs the Panel for Educational Policy.

"Establishment of the first hip-hop High School in the Bronx honors that legacy and represents a powerful investment in our students and culture," Gonzalez said.

Panel for Educational Policy member Faraji Hannah-Jones spoke about how Grandmaster Flash, a pioneering hip-hop artist who invented the DJ technique called "Quick Mix Theory," used mathematical equations in his music.

"Hip-hop is not just an art form. It's a discipline," Hannah-Jones said. "Our children, our Black children, are being taught Shakespeare, but we're not being taught about Public Enemy and N.W.A. and Dr. Dre and Ice Cube and the absolute resistance and being able to think critically about the harms that our government and our political and even our public institutions have done to our people."

Benita Parsons, another panel member, advocated for the school to focus on artistry – and also teach students about the business of the music industry.

"THE BRONX SCHOOL OF HIP-HOP WILL BE THE FIRST NON-CHARTER SCHOOL DEDICATED SOLELY TO HIP-HOP, OFFICIALS SAID. A CHARTER SCHOOL IN ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA, CALLED THE HIGH SCHOOL FOR RECORDING ARTS, IS NICKNAMED "HIP-HOP HIGH," AND TEACHES STUDENTS HIP-HOP AND "OTHER ART FORMS" ACCORDING TO THEIR WEBSITE."

In its first year, the high school is expected to serve roughly 115-125 ninth graders and will continue adding grades in subsequent years, according to a proposal for the project. The school will teach hip-hop foundations, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement through music while creating pathways to college, internships, and careers for students, Sherman said. A Grammy-nominated producer, local business partners, and others are helping with the creation of the school, Sherman said.

"What began Wednesday night as public comment on the merger of I.S. 313 and I.S. 339 and the opening of the Bronx School of Hip-Hop quickly turned into a history lesson garnished with personal testimonies of the power of music, history, and culture.

Maribel Gonzalez, the president of District 9's local parent education council, said DJ Kool Herc's party at 1520 Sedgwick Ave went on to "spark a global cultural movement."

"Our kids are creative, and they know how to do artist work," Parsons said. "But there are no lawyers advocating for us in hip-hop. There are no record labels … we need to see more of that."

Jessica Shuran Yu is a New York City-based journalist.

Contact – atjshuranyu@chalkbeat.org.

GET HIP

Nearly 30 Years Later, Hip Hop Education is in the spotlight again.

Almost 30 years after the High School for Recording Arts was established, a new public school in Brooklyn centered on hip hop is making news of being the first public *district* school to use hip hop as its foundation.

In coverage of that school, writer *Jessica Shuran Yu* of *Chalkbeat New York* acknowledged the High School for Recording Arts in conversation as the first public *charter* school dedicated to hip hop pedagogy. She was sure to acknowledge HSRA in conversation with the method of learning.

When asked how it felt to see education follow a path that began nearly three decades ago and how he would acknowledge both the new school and Jessica, David 'TC' Ellis said—

> "OH MAN, I JUST WANT TO SEND A SHOUT OUT TO THAT NEW SCHOOL BASED ON HIP HOP IN BROOKLYN, AND ALSO TO THE WRITER THAT SHOUTED OUT THE HIGH SCHOOL FOR RECORDING ARTS. THAT'S MY LIFE WORK AND I JUST REALLY APPRECIATE THE RECOGNITION AND SHOUT OUT"

The acknowledgment connects the new school to the earlier work that helped establish hip hop as a legitimate part of public education. Nearly 30 years later, that work continues to be referenced as more schools adopt similar approaches.

— Article by ***Jordan Lyles***

Hip-hop artists Chuck-D and Flavor Flav, members of Public Enemy, perform during a celebration for the 50th anniversary of hip-hop on August 12, 2023 in the Bronx. — Getty Images

QRs 4U

All ThE CODES.

Four Fingers Magazine Issue #1

Missed a QR code? No worries. Scan here to catch every link, extra content, and bonus feature from this issue. All the codes in one place.
— ***Four Fingers Magazine, Issue #1***

Moriah's Freestyle Dance

Son De Querdas Performance

Sounds of Blackness

Cali4nia Students

Yellow Roses Live

Student Showcase Uncut

Iyani Cover Songs

Black Suburban by *Tru*

Hoop Dreams Documentary

Hoop Dreams Book

Prince Talks About Chappelle

Tris by *Lil Mac*

Still Standing Documentary

Remix ED 2025 Recap

FOX News 1998

A Change Is Gonna Come

Easier BTS

Count of Four BTS

Sue Ann Timelapse

Easier (Studio Video)

Lewiee Blaze Speaks

Jazzmyn RED

Mike Lipset x Phil Matero

Count of Four (Studio Video)

Blues Band Rehearsal

Miking Drums with Max Cutshall

Blues Band Performance

Issue #1 Full Playlist

Register

If you're serious about music, sound, and storytelling, High School for Recording Arts is where it starts. This isn't your average classroom; there's real studio time, real mentors, and real pathways to careers in music, film, and creative technology.

Housing Resources

High School for Recording Arts connects students to real support, not just classes.That includes access to food programs, housing support for students experiencing homelessness, mental health services, medical referrals, transportation help, and basic-needs assistance. The school works with social workers, homeless liaisons, and community partners to help students stay safe, stable, and in school.

HSRA
HIGH SCHOOL FOR RECORDING ARTS

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District Name:
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Mailing Address:
1166 UNIVERSITY AVE
SAINT PAUL MN, 55104 –8888

Type:
Regular school

Supervisory Union #:
N/A

NCES School ID:
270016002955

NCES District ID:
2700160

Physical Address:
1166 UNIVERSITY AVE
SAINT PAUL MN, 55104 –8888

Status:
Open

Grade Span:
9 - 12

State School ID:
MN-074039-074039010

State District ID:
MN-074039

Phone:
(651)287-0890

Charter:
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Website:
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MINNESOTA STATEHOOD 1858 1958

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